

THE ROLLING STONES

THE BRAND NEW ALBUM. THE FIRST REVIEW

ELTON JOHN

GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD AT 50

BERNIE MARSDEN

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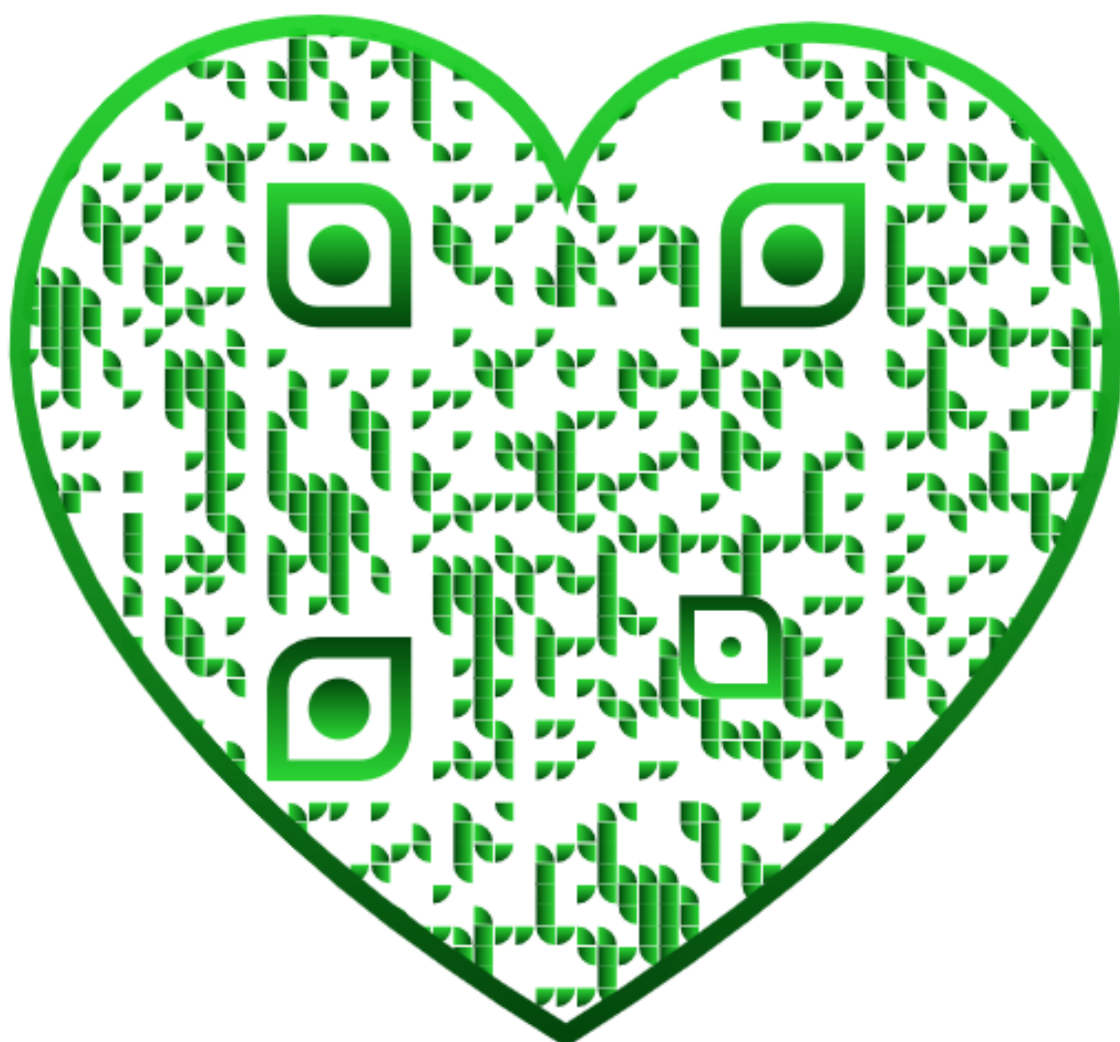
Hello!
Status Quo

50 YEARS ON. IN THEIR OWN WORDS

PLUS!

JOE BONAMASSA ★ THE DARKNESS ★ STEVEN WILSON
THE CADILLAC THREE ★ FLEETWOOD MAC ★ DANKO JONES







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YEAR OF THE DEVIL

Status Quo

"After *Piledriver* had taken off the way it did, with *Hello!* we set out to do the same thing but at a higher level."



8 The Dirt

AC/DC and Scorpions eye live dates; Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame founder sacked... Welcome back Needtobreathe and Inger Lorre... Say hello to James And The Cold Gun and Geese... Say goodbye to Jimmy Buffett, Gary Wright, Chris Overland...

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Wow. 1973 really was a terrific year for music, wasn't it? The number of incredible albums that have celebrated their golden anniversary in 2023 is kinda mind-blowing.

This month we take a deep dive into two more stone-cold classics that reached their half-century this year. On September 28, cover stars Status Quo's *Hello!* album had its 50th birthday, and just one week later, on October 5, Elton John's epic double set *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* reached the same milestone.

Elsewhere this issue we hang out with Joe Bonamassa in a French castle, put the world to rights with The Darkness's Justin Hawkins, try to discover what makes Steven Wilson tick, find out just what was in that secret package Steven Tyler gave to The Cadillac Three's Jaren Johnston... and much more.

Just as we went to print on our last issue we heard the very sad news that Bernie Marsden had passed away. We pay tribute to him from page 8.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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POLLY GLASS

Classic Rock's Deputy Editor Polly has been very busy this issue. Well, let's be honest, she's busy every issue. But this month she headed to France to hang out with Joe Bonamassa (p40) and also spent some quality time chatting with Steven Wilson (p54). Oh, and in between all that she managed to wrangle a whole heap of new music to bring you The Hot List (p68). No rest for the wicked, eh?



DAVE LING

Dave bought his first very copy of Status Quo's *Hello!* on vinyl as a pudding bowl-haired teenager. To celebrate the record's 50th anniversary this issue, with the help of the band members (our conversations with Alan and Rick come from his archive), he does a deep-dive on the album that many consider the jewel in the group's crown (p28). Just for the record, Dave prefers the album *Qua*.



HENRY YATES

Henry is a freelance journalist who has written for titles including *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *Guitarist* and *Total Guitar*. This month he hears the war stories of The Cadillac Three in our regular Ever Meet Lemmy? feature (p64). (For the record, Henry *did* once meet the late Motörhead man, and got a friendly bollocking for ordering mineral water instead of the regulation JD.) Follow him @henryyateswords



5150

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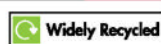
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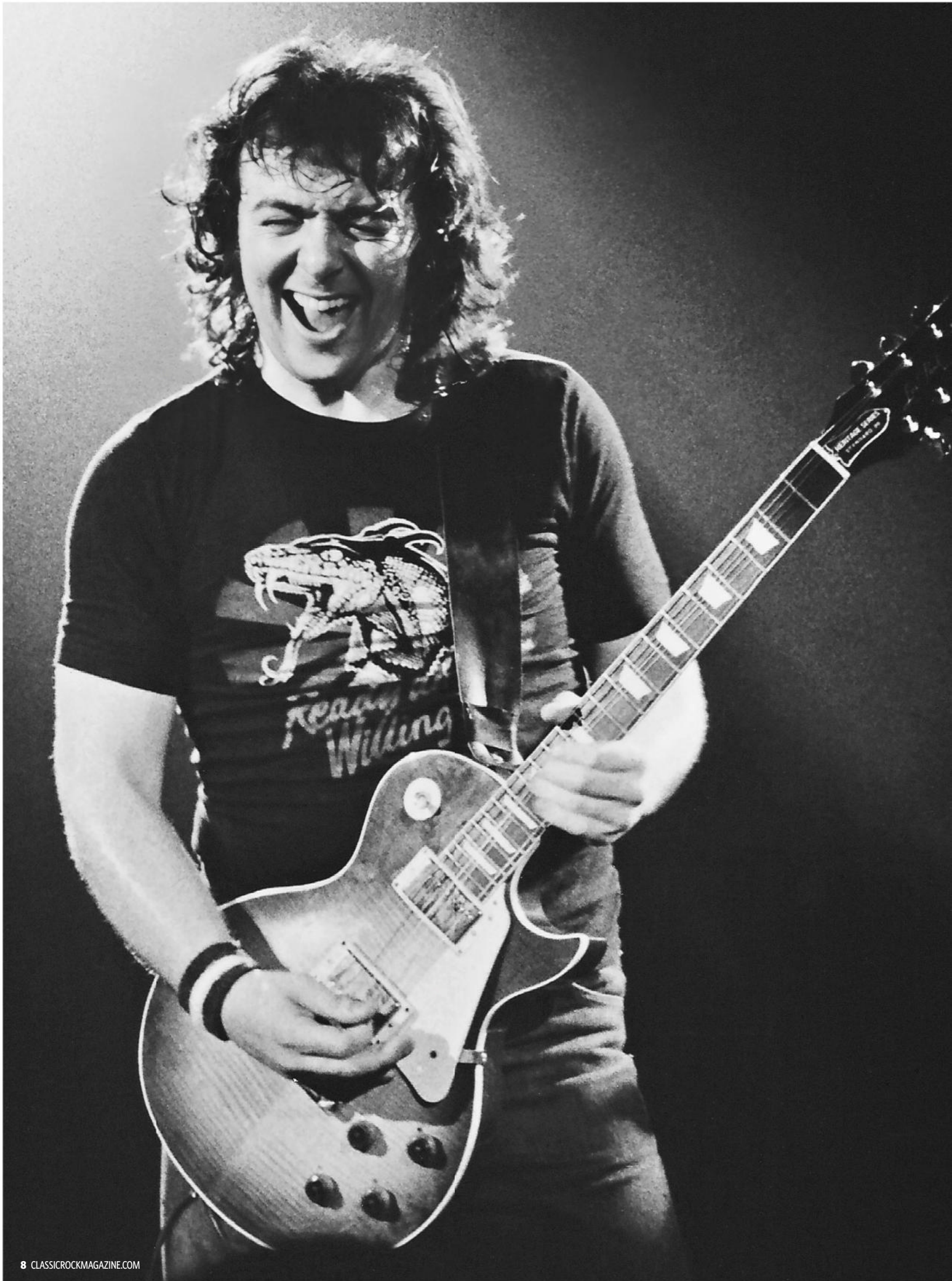


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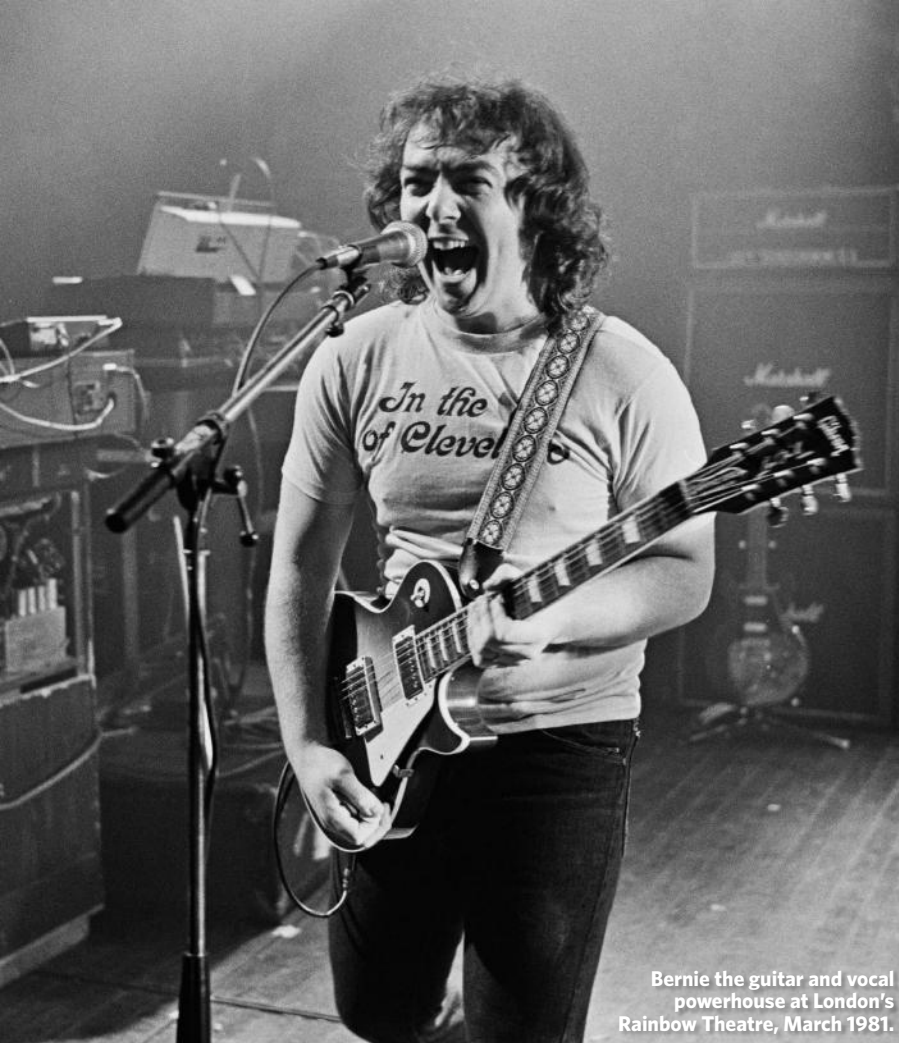
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Words: **Dave Ling** Photo: **Anders Körling**



Bernie the guitar and vocal powerhouse at London's Rainbow Theatre, March 1981.



Power trio: Bernie Marsden, Neil Murray and Micky Moody.



'Snake charmers': Bernie Marsden and David Coverdale, London, August 1978.

“Bernie was very happy to be reconciled with David [Coverdale]. It closed the book for him.” Don Airey

Wednesday,” Marsden told *Classic Rock* in 1999. “When I replied ‘nothing’, I got: ‘Okay, be at the BBC, ten o’clock, *Top Of The Pops*. Ta-ra’, and he was gone.”

Although brief, Bernie’s spell alongside Powell introduced him to keyboard player Don Airey (now with Deep Purple).

“I came from the jazz world, and had never worked with a rock band before,” Airey recalls now. “Bernie had just bought one of Eric Clapton’s Les Pauls for five hundred pounds, and the sounds he got were a revelation to me. Plus, Bernie saved my life following a collision on the M1 at seventy miles an hour. The door of the van flew open, and I was headed out until Bernie grabbed me and hauled me back in. Had he not done so, I doubt I’d have survived.”

“I loved Bernie’s playing,” says bassist Neil Murray, his bandmate in Whitesnake. “He had such an attitude, and could be aggressive, though he was sensitive when required. He played from the heart.”

In 1975 Bernie replaced guitarist Alan Shacklock in Babe Ruth, and played on their albums *Stealin’ Home* and *Kid’s Stuff*.

Things took another turn when Powell recommended his former bandmate in Cozy Powell’s Hammer to the ex-Deep Purple pair of Jon Lord and Ian Paice, who were forming a group with Ashton, Gardner & Dyke frontman/keyboard player Tony Ashton. Paice recalls Bernie blowing the other auditionees out of the studio door.

“Bernie was a class above everyone else,” says Paice. “We had some technical whizz kids there, but they had no feel, also people with no feel but lots of skill. So when he walked in the door he was a breath of fresh air.”

Then came the band with whom Marsden will

always be most associated. While in Munich recording the follow-up to Paice Ashton Lord’s 1977 album *Malice In Wonderland*, Marsden met David Coverdale for the first time. Not long after, he joined David Coverdale’s White Snake, as they were called originally.

In fact, in a classic conundrum Marsden found himself fretting over two mouth-watering gigs at once when PAL saxophonist Howie Casey put his name forward to Paul McCartney’s Wings, to replace Jimmy McCulloch, although as it turned out no offer was made.

“The Paice Ashton Lord album is very

controlled and slick, there’s no great blowing in it, it’s about the songs and arrangements,” Marsden told *Classic Rock*. “So when I started playing freely at rehearsal, David took me aside and said: ‘Erm, can I have a word? I had no idea you played like that’. That’s how it began.”

Besides Coverdale’s commanding vocal presence, the partnership between Marsden and slide guitarist Micky Moody was at the heart of Whitesnake’s greatness, and the band built their reputation on stage, their music a dizzying mix of



With Whitesnake in February 1981: (l-r) David Coverdale, Jon Lord, Ian Paice, Micky Moody, Neil Murray, Bernie Marsden.



“Bernie was an incredibly funny and witty man. He would literally have me howling at his tales.”

Jim Kirkpatrick

commercial hard rock and dirty blues, overlaid with the type of sexual innuendo that these days would be completely unacceptable.

It was Marsden who proposed Whitesnake should add some soul by covering Bobby Bland's R&B ballad *Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City*, which became a highlight of their live set, the connection between band and audience often bringing Coverdale to tears.

Marsden spoke of an “instant rapport” with his “surrogate brother” Coverdale. “Neither of us had any brothers or sisters, we were born in the same year, and although we grew up two hundred miles apart we discovered we had the same influences.”

Marsden had co-written Whitesnake's two biggest hits, *Fool For Your Loving* and *Here I Go Again*, but that didn't prevent Coverdale from firing Marsden, Murray and Paice upon completion of the band's fifth album, 1982's *Saints & Sinners*, as he set his sights on the US market and the new MTV.

“It wasn't personal, just business,” Coverdale explained of the sackings. “They were cruising on gold status, and I'm hungry for platinum.”

The re-recording of *Fool For Your Loving* and *Here I Go Again* by later incarnations of Whitesnake during their rise to MTV domination poured salt into the wound. The royalty cheques were very welcome, of course, and Bernie once told me that he considered the updated *Here I Go Again* “excellent”, although he didn't have the same feeling about the version of *Fool For Your Loving* by a line-up featuring guitar virtuoso Steve Vai.

“Micky and I saw the video together at a gig in Spain,” he said with a smirk. “Steve is a fantastic player, but when

he fell to his knees and began praying to that guitar, Micky collapsed to his own knees and began crying with laughter. It was terrible, dreadful. They ruined it.”

At the time he was ousted from Whitesnake, Marsden was still a young man, and his future troubled him. “I was thinking: ‘I'm thirty years old, I'm finished,’” he said. He needn't have worried. A wide array of bands, projects and solo records followed. Some were more successful than others, but he was tenacious. “That's the thing about Bernie,” Don Airey says. “When faced by a wall, he went around it. He never gave up.”

The short-lived band SOS was followed by two albums from Alaska, a group that deserved better. When Deep Purple confirmed a comeback at Knebworth Park in 1985, Bernie used his connection with Ian Paice to blag a spot for Alaska as openers on the bill.

After Alaska came MGM, which reunited him with Murray and former Trapeze guitarist Mel Galley, who had succeeded him in Whitesnake.

As the decade ended, Bernie formed the Moody-Marsden Band with Micky Moody, the first of several bands to celebrate his heritage in Whitesnake.

As the Company Of Snakes, Marsden and Moody were reunited with Murray and Airey. In 2001 I wrote an ‘on the road’ piece at a club show in Wrexham for Classic Rock. Despite preparing to release their debut album, *Burst The Bubble*, the band's repertoire was still stuffed with ‘Snake standards. “In an ideal word I'd eventually like to get to the point where the set is ➤



BYE-BYE BERNIE

The stars say goodnight

“RIP to a fine guitar player and songwriter.”
Luke Morley, Thunder

“Bernie was a treasure of a human and a passionate guitar player I have admired for so long.”
Peter Frampton

“I saw Bernie some years back at one of those festivals you do, probably in the beer tent, and he still had the sense of humour, also that warmth and charm which would rub off so easily on everyone he met.”
Phil Mogg, UFO

“This news has left me in pieces, it's so sad. I tried to call Bernie last week but no one picked up. I actually spoke to him in December '22 when he pulled out of the Planet Rock Winter Fest. The music he leaves behind is his legacy.”
Andy Scott, Sweet

“Bernie really was a great musician. I paid him a compliment once about his singing, and he was so pleased that I did. I was sad and shocked to learn of his passing.”
Graham Bonnet

“Bernie was a fantastic blues-rock player of extraordinary taste, feel & wily good humour. A player's player. The world of the electric guitar has lost a gentleman and ascholar of the first rank.”
Vernon Reid, Living Colour

“Bernie was a true legend and an inspiration. Our condolences go out to all his family and friends.”
John Norum, Europe

“A superb and influential guitarist and a lovely bloke. I have loved those early Whitesnake records since childhood.”
Mikael Åkerfeldt, Opeth

Bernie Marsden playing with Joe Bonamassa on the Keeping The Blues Alive At Sea cruise in 2019.



Bernie Marsden: a rare talent and much loved.

“Bernie was a great singer, too, though he didn’t get full credit for that. You underestimated him at your peril.” Joe Bonamassa

fifty per cent, or even sixty-forty, original material,” he told me.

Although Marsden spoke of Coverdale with caution, he thought he would actually approve of the *Company Of Snakes*: “In his heart of hearts, I think he’d do so most highly. After all, he’d be watching his own show.”

At that gig, when Bernie went to the bar, Airey confided that every time Marsden’s phone rang he still expected Coverdale to be at the other end. Returning with the drinks, Bernie said with a smile: “If David did call, I’d ask him where and when he wanted to meet. Only a fool or a liar would say otherwise.”

In 2010 Marsden and Coverdale began exchanging emails, and then ran into one another at an airport. That meeting led to the guitarist guesting with Whitesnake at the Sweden Rock Festival the following year. A few weeks later it happened again at Hammersmith.

Marsden described those experiences as “fantastic”, but, having fallen out with Micky Moody he was quick to nip in the bud any possibility of a classic Whitesnake reunion, commenting: “That particular bridge has been torn down.”

“Bernie was very happy to be reconciled with David,” Don Airey believes. “It closed the book for him.”

“Bernie and Micky had such great, fun-loving personalities, which is why it was a shame they fell out so badly,”

Neil Murray comments. “Put the two of them together and all sorts of lunacy happened. They loved practical jokes, from pretending to be ghosts when Whitesnake recorded at the [supposedly haunted] Clearwell Castle, to hiring a pantomime horse costume for an important record company presentation.”

“Bernie had no ‘off’ button and was always a barrel of laughs, especially with Micky,” says Ian Paice. “They were a source of great amusement – sometimes annoyingly, but they provided a lot of fun.”

Murray, Airey and Paice all remained in regular contact with Marsden, although due to covid and their own schedules they saw less of him than they would have liked. Each of them knew that Bernie was ill, but not the full extent of his condition, reported to have been bacterial meningitis.

For Joe Bonamassa, the first inkling that something was wrong came when Marsden declined what had become a regular jam session at Bonamassa’s show.

“Bernie would always get to the gigs early, because he wanted to tell stories before he sat in with us,” Bonamassa explains sadly. “Bernie knew everyone, and he had the best stories, but he was so modest.”

Having met for the first time at Bonamassa’s Royal Albert Hall show in 2009, the pair collaborated on Bonamassa’s next album, *Royal Tea*, and they became firm friends.

“I am truly heartbroken,”

Bonomassa said. “There has been no better ambassador for the electric guitar than Bernie Marsden. The guy had such tone, he could play through anything. Bernie was a great singer, too, though he didn’t get full credit for that.”

“Regardless of what he was plugged into, Bernie always had the best sound on stage,” says FM guitarist Jim Kirkpatrick, who for almost 20 years accompanied Marsden at hundreds of solo shows, as well as writing and recording. “It could be some cheap rubbish amp and guitar, but he’d make it sound great. He was an incredibly funny and witty man. He would have me howling at his tales.”

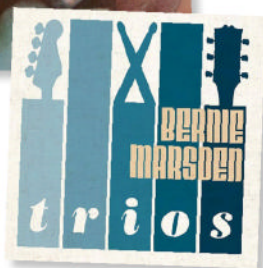
In adulthood Marsden felt privileged to become a friend of his boyhood hero Peter Green. In fact, he spent the day of Green’s all-star tribute show at the London Palladium with Green “talking about Robert Johnson, guitars and fishing”. With amusement in his voice, Marsden spoke of reminding Green what was going on and offered to drive him to the Palladium, “and he just said: ‘Nah, a cup of tea with you would be just as good.’”

Ian Paice continued to play what he calls “extra-curricular gigs” with Marsden on an occasional basis. “If I use the word ‘hustler’ about Bernie it’s in the nicest possible sense,” he says with a smile. “The guy was always looking for something to do, and he totally believed in himself. The songs he wrote justify that.”

Don Airey last saw Marsden a couple of years ago, when Bernie appeared as a guest at the keyboard player’s local charity gig in Great Gransden. “Bernie turned up with The Beast [his celebrated 1959 Gibson Les Paul, nicknamed by Cozy Powell] and played this absolutely incredible blues set,” Airey says, marvelling at the memory. “It was one of the greatest half-hours of guitar playing that I’ve ever seen.”

During his final years Marsden’s work rate never slipped, and three acclaimed post-pandemic solo albums – *Kings*, *Chess* and *Trios* – paid tribute to the music that he’d grown up with.

“If you’ve got the talent, luck will fall your way,” Bernie once told *Classic Rock*. “All I’ve ever tried to do is play a show with as much honesty as I can, because without the people who put their hands in their pockets and come to gigs there’s nothing left.” ●





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RIP

Thank you...
and good night.

Jack Sonni

December 9, 1954 – August 30, 2023

Known affectionately at the time as the “other guitar player in Dire Straits”, Pennsylvania-born Jack Sonni joined the band in 1984, not long before they took off globally with the following year’s album *Brothers In Arms*, and was with them for four years. Sonni was 68. Cause of death has not been announced.

Steve Harwell

January 9, 1967 – September 4, 2023

Steve Harwell was the singer with the multimillion-selling, Grammy-nominated US punks Smash Mouth from the band’s inception in 1994 until his retirement in 2021 due to ongoing health issues (Smash Mouth continue to the present day). The 56-year-old died of liver failure. “Steve lived a 100% full-throttle life, burning brightly across the universe before burning out,” commented the band’s manager Robert Hayes.

Tom Davies

Died September 5, 2023

American band Nebula have paid tribute to their long-serving bass player, who died following his difficult nine-month battle with leukemia. He was 48. “We are crushed losing our brother, band mate and friend, but we are also blessed to have known, created and been a part of his life that was cut too short,” said a band statement. “Tom faced every hurdle with great strength, courage, determination and of course humour.”

Bruce Guthrie

Died September 5, 2023

Celtic-rockers Runrig have announced the passing of their lead singer Bruce Guthrie at the age of 62 following a long battle with cancer. Born in Nova Scotia in Canada, he joined Runrig in 1998. “Everyone associated with Runrig is heartbroken at the loss of a dear friend and such a special musical colleague,” said a statement from the group from the Isle of Skye, who called it a day in 2018.

Brendan Croker

August 15, 1953 – September 10, 2023

Mark Knopfler broke the news of the death of Brendan Croker, his bandmate in the Notting Hillbillies, who had been suffering from leukaemia. The Hillbillies were the Dire Straits guitarist’s country-rock project. “Brendan was a true artist in every way,” Knopfler said. “He appeared eccentric to many but was positive, brave and generous to a fault.” Croker was 70.

Bob Feldman

June 14, 1940 –
August 23, 2023

New York-born songwriter and producer Bob Feldman was involved in some of the biggest hits of the 60s and 70s, including *Hang On Sloopy*, *I Want Candy* and David Bowie’s *Sorrow*. He was 83. Cause of death has not been announced.

Robert Becerra

December 17, 1958 –
September 1, 2023

Robert Becerra, the guitarist with pioneering LA punk/hardcore band The Stains has died at the age of 64 from liver cancer. “Robert was a true fighter and fought till the very end,” said the band, who signed to the SST label in the 1980s.



Richard Davis

April 15, 1930 –
September 6, 2023

Jazz bassist Richard Davis (pictured), who played with Van Morrison, Miles Davis, Bruce Springsteen and Paul Simon, among many others, has died after two years of hospice care. He was 93 years old.

Aidan McGarrigle

Died August 29, 2023

Australian hard rockers Massive have described their late bassist as “the life of every party, in every city we went to”. Aidan McGarrigle was just 33 years old. Cause of death has not been reported.

John Kezdy

Died August 26, 2023

The former singer with Chicago punks The Effigies died in a crash while riding his bicycle. He was 64 years old. One of the first punk bands in the city, The Effigies had four spells of activity from between 1980 and 2009.



Jimmy Buffett

December 25, 1946 – September 1, 2023

SIR PAUL MCCARTNEY has led the tributes to the huge-selling American singer and musician best loved for his enduringly popular hit single from 1977, *Margaritaville*. The 76-year-old had fought Merkel cell carcinoma, a rare and aggressive form of skin cancer. He died at his home on Long Island.

McCartney hailed Buffett’s ability as a vocalist and songwriter, and said he was “one of the kindest and most generous people” he knew.

“Jimmy had a most amazing lust for life and a beautiful sense of humour,” he continued. “Right up to the last minute his eyes still twinkled with a humour that said: ‘I love this world and I’m going to enjoy every minute of it.’”

Buffett’s laid-back music melded

country-rock with calypso melodies, and fans lapped up yarns of a carefree life of and general beach-bum existence wrapped up in tunes such as *Cheeseburger In Paradise*, *Volcano* and *Fins*. He had album sales of 23 million in the US alone.

Buffett also wrote several best-selling books, including *Tales From Margaritaville*, *Where Is Joe Merchant?*, and the memoir *A Pirate Looks At Fifty*.

US President Joe Biden tweeted: “A poet of paradise, Jimmy Buffett was an American music icon who inspired generations to step back and find the joy in life and in one another. My wife Jill and I got to know Jimmy, and he was in life as he was performing on stage – full of goodwill and joy, using his gift to bring people together.” **DL**

Gary Wright

April 26, 1943 – September 4, 2023

BORN IN CRESSKILL, New Jersey, Gary Wright had what seemed like two separate careers, first as a keyboard player and vocalist with the British blues-rock band Spooky Tooth, with whom he released three albums between 1968 and ‘69, and secondly via his huge solo hit single *Dream Weaver*, which reached No.2 in the US in 1976. He later admitted that the song was influenced by George Harrison, having played keyboards on the former Beatle’s album *All Things Must Pass*.

Wright released a solo album, *Extraction*, in 1970 and, following a Spooky Tooth

reunion tour in 2004, performed live frequently with his own group or as a member of Ringo Starr’s All-Starr Band. His most recent solo record, *Connected*, was released in 2010.

Wright was 80 years old at the time of his death, following a six-year fight with Parkinson’s disease.

Stephen Bishop wrote on Twitter: “Gary’s vibrant personality and exceptional talent made every moment [spent in his company] truly enjoyable. His legacy will live on for many years to come.” **DL**

Chris Overland

October 24, 1956 – August 22, 2023

THE CO-FOUNDING LEAD guitarist of FM, Chris Overland has died suddenly at home at the age of 66. Together with vocalist-guitarist brother Steve, Chris was an original member of the band Wildlife, which for a while also included former Bad Company drummer Simon Kirke.

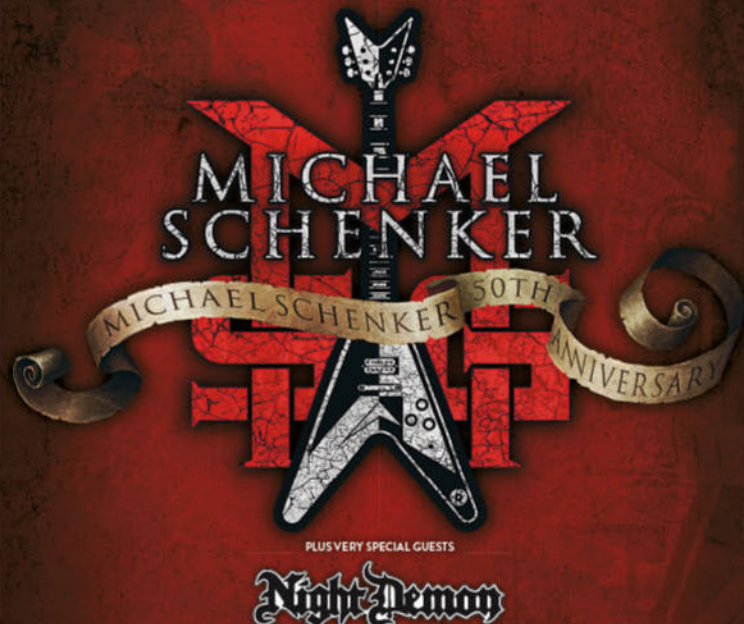
The Overlands co-formed FM in 1984. The band’s albums include the two cult classics *Indiscreet* and *Tough It Out*, and they toured with Bon Jovi, REO Speedwagon,

Gary Moore, Status Quo, Tina Turner, Meat Loaf and more.

Mildly disenchanted with the band’s bluesier direction, Chris left FM in 1990, and became a professional guitar tutor. Years later, he said his biggest claim to fame was hearing a song he’d co-written, *Bad Luck*, playing in the café in *Coronation Street*.

Chris’s brother Steve said: “A part of what the band was and still are will be missing for ever.” **DL**

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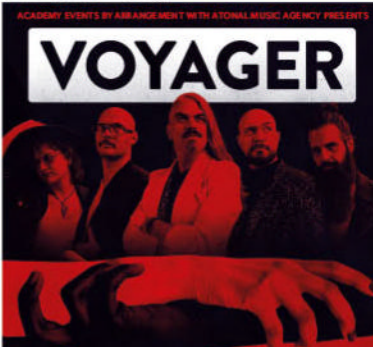
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NEWS

AC/DC Dates Being Planned?

Scorpions also pondering anniversary tour.

AC/DC HIRED DRUMMER Matt Laug for their much anticipated spot at this month's Power Trip festival in California, and bass player Cliff Williams came out of retirement to complete the rhythm section. Laug is drummer with Tom Petty sideman Mike Campbell's band The Dirty Knobs. According to the *Daily Star* AC/DC are lining up additional live work in 2024, with a source telling the tabloid: "More dates are being looked at, some big shows."

Scorpions leader Rudolf Schenker hopes his band will hit the road in 2025 for a 60th-anniversary tour that may also involve original drummer Wolfgang Dziony and bassist Achim Kirchhoff. "To celebrate 60 years of Scorpions could be a possibility," says Schenker.



AC/DC: "dates are being looked at," says a source.

Hall Of Fame Sacks Co-Founder

Wenner axed for disrespecting women and artists of colour.

THE ROCK AND ROLL Hall Of Fame has fired co-founder Jann Wenner following an interview with *The New York Times* in which the 77-year-old disparaged black and female artists. Wenner was promoting a book called *The Masters*, which collates a selection of his interviews for *Rolling Stone* magazine. When challenged about the fact that it featured just white males, Wenner commented that women were not "articulate enough on this intellectual level", and that Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye and Curtis Mayfield were unable to communicate their musical "genius" as well as Bono, Bob Dylan, Jerry Garcia, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, Bruce Springsteen and Pete Townshend – the so-called "philosophers of rock". Wenner later apologised "wholeheartedly" for what he termed "badly chosen words".

"The very idea of a book called *The Masters* which blatantly omits people of colour and women [suggests] a much larger and more systematic problem," said a statement from the band Living Colour. "To hear that Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell, Tina Turner or any of the women that he chooses not to mention are not worthy of the status of 'master' smacks of sexist gatekeeping and exclusionist behaviour." **DL**

The baby grand piano upon which **Freddie Mercury** wrote *Bohemian Rhapsody* was sold for £1.74 million at a recent auction of possessions owned by Mercury's former partner Mary Austin. A portion of the proceeds went to HIV/Aids charities the Mercury Phoenix Trust and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

The Black Crowes release a deluxe expanded edition of their second album *The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion* on December 1. Its bonus features include previously unreleased studio recordings, rare B-sides and a 1993 live show from Houston.

Judas Priest frontman **Rob Halford** and metal queen singer **Doro Pesch** have recorded a duet version of the Jim Steinman-written power ballad *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* recorded by Bonnie Tyler in 1983. "It's very heavy," Doro comments. "I get goosebumps when I hear it."



A new live album by the **Jimi Hendrix Experience** (pictured) is released on November 10 via Experience Hendrix. The 10-track *Hollywood Bowl! August 18, 1967* will be available on vinyl, CD and digital platforms.

Brixton Academy will be allowed to reopen, as long as it meets 77 "extensive and robust" conditions to ensure public safety. The London venue had its licence temporarily revoked last year following the deaths of two women at a gig there by Afrobeats singer Asake.



WELCOME BACK

Inger Lorre

The former Nymphs frontwoman returns, hoping to shine some light into a very dark world.

It's **24 YEARS** since Inger Lorre released a record. Now, inspired by current world events and her own journey of self-discovery and self-improvement, she's back with *Gloryland*, an emotional journey through Americana in collaboration with her drummer and "partner in crime" Eric Contreras. Today, after a tough couple of decades, she's embracing sobriety and looking to the future thanks to her newly feathered creative wings.

What can you tell us about *Gloryland*?

It's my most proud moment. Before, in the male-dominated hard rock scene, I kind of sung everything with my chin in the air, like, check out how tough I am. It was a character; *Gloryland* is brutally honest. I was afraid to show that part of myself to the world. I wrote these songs from the bottom of my heart. It's about forgiveness and redemption in such a big way.

Why twenty-four years between this album and your previous one?

It was really the fans that brought me back, because I'm still afraid of the industry, the corporate machine. But you've got to keep it positive, because the world is so freakin' dark right now. I felt like I needed to help heal some of the sadness. It was climate change and covid, everyone was committing suicide, everyone on fentanyl. I don't know if the world has ever been in a darker place. But there's something about it where I just needed to hold on to hope.

***Gloryland* has a real Americana feel to it. Where did that come from?**

My father would always say: "You sound like a country artist to me." And I would roll my eyes and go: "God, dad, you don't know anything." I didn't know I had this

voice. We know it's original, because I'm not copying from anything but the feelings in my soul.

***More Real* is about when you seriously considered becoming a Buddhist nun, is that right?**

I did. But I was fifty-six and you had to be fifty-five or under. It was a beautiful ashram in Tibet.

What led you down that path?

I was so angry and disappointed with

Western culture. I felt extremely empty. I'd just had the best relationship I've ever had, and when I couldn't stop using he was like: "Nope", and he walked out the door. And that finally was like: "Oh my god, I gotta do something about this."

Then once I got some clarity, I knew what I was running from. The reason I was doing all these drugs was because of the culture, and these false friendships. Everyone wants to feel better, but there's less and less things to feel good about, society is breaking apart at such a fast rate. And honestly, I came back to fight Donald Trump and things like him.

Have you gained a lot of strength from this record?

So much. I feel like a different person. It's taken on a life of its own. And now that makes me tear up, because I thought I was completely forgotten, just a has-been train wreck, drug-addled loser that the industry had spit out. This has given me a whole new reason to live. I've always had a plan, and I don't have one now. I guess that's the new plan. Just whatever life throws up. All opportunities are open, and we'll take all the opportunities. **EJ**

Gloryland is out now via *Kitten Robot Records*

"We're a no-frills rock band. No backing tracks, no gimmicks. We leave it all on the stage. We really do go for it."

★ HIGH HOPES

James And The Cold Gun

From Foo Fighters covers in a garage to GN'R in Hyde Park, the Welsh rockers are going up.

WHEN PEARL JAM's Stone Gossard contacted James Joseph on Instagram offering to sign his band, he didn't believe it was him. "I didn't even reply for a day or two," says singer/guitarist Joseph. "I said, 'Oh yeah? That would be fun – tell me more.' Next thing you know, we're on a Zoom call with him."

Now James And The Cold Gun's self-titled debut album is out on Gossard's revived Loosegroove Records (which released Queens Of The Stone Age's debut back in the day). Gossard had heard the Welsh rockers' tune *Long Way Home* on Seattle's KEXP Radio – a tune they had donated to a charity compilation in Cardiff, their home town, and had made its way across the Atlantic. Talk about good karma.

Until three years ago 28-year-old Joseph had been the bassist for rising pop rock outfit Holding Absence. But when he and housemate, guitarist James Biss, started blowing away lockdown cobwebs with jam sessions in their garage, things changed. "It was like we were fifteen again," says Joseph, "playing these horrendous Foo Fighters and Zeppelin covers at first. We wanted this band to be fairly simple, high energy, cathartic rock. We didn't overthink it."

Joseph quit his old band for the new one, taking its name from

the Kate Bush banger that doubles as their walk-on music. James And The Cold Gun released DIY singles (early track *She Moves* has just over a million Spotify plays), and EPs too. They've toured the UK with Those Damn Crows, The Wildhearts and Therapy?. Audiences have told them they sound like Three Colours Red, Mudhoney and other bands from before their time: "But we'd go back and listen and think, 'Fuck, we're happy to be compared to that!' We were slowly figuring out what we are, and still are."

Along with the punky, early-Manics directness and post-grunge edge, there's some retro, shoegazey lyrical angst to The Gun's college-y rock; *Bittersweet* could be The Cure borrowing Nirvana's backline. Studded with hooky tunes like single *Something To Say*, the debut album was written and played by the two Jameses and drummer Jack Wrench. With valuable input from mix/mastering guru Ben Moore (Rocket From The Crypt), they engineered and self-produced, at the behest of Gossard.

Live, bassist Peter Smith and guitarist Al Jones complete the lineup. Earlier this year they appeared on the bill for Guns N'Roses' BST summer concert in Hyde Park.

"We're just a no-frills rock band," Joseph reckons. "No backing tracks, no gimmicks. Live, we leave it all on the stage. People have compared us to punk stuff like the Ramones or Stooges. We don't sound like them, but they get that from the way we perform. We really do go for it." **GM**

James And The Cold Gun is out now via Loosegroove.



"I got into this album when I was fifteen," says James Joseph, "partly because the song *Savoir Faire* was on a Tony Hawks skateboarding videogame. Those games shaped my music taste without me realising. There was a lot of punk, metal and hip-hop on there. That's where it all came from, initially."



NEWS

Former Judas Priest guitarist **KK Downing** swears he will never again play with the band. He claims that being "segregated" from the rest of the band at last year's Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame induction was the final straw. "I was glad that I [participated] because I kind of earned it," Downing told broadcaster Eddie Trunk, "but it just didn't feel like it used to – far from it."

Ozzy Osbourne is to undergo what he swears will be his final surgical procedure since his serious fall in 2019, which aggravated injuries he suffered in a 2003 quad bike crash. "It'll be the final surgery," he says. "Regardless of the way it ends up, I'm not doing it any more. I can't."

Pearl Jam guitarist **Mike McCready** is working on a rock opera about the Seattle music scene, to celebrate his late friend and Temple Of The Dog colleague, Chris Cornell.



Bruce Springsteen (pictured) had to postpone several September concerts as part of a North American stadium in order to be treated for symptoms of a peptic ulcer, a condition that causes ulcers to form in the stomach or small intestine.

Steve Harley was forced to cancel some November and December dates with Cockney Rebel to undertake a medical procedure. "I aim to be back on the road, ready for the spotlight for our January dates. That's my goal," says the singer.



Marsupilami

Marsupilami, Transatlantic Records, UK, 1970. £200.



The sound of Marsupilami conjures up myriad atmospheres, mainly esoteric in nature. It's like a soundtrack to macabre rituals being carried out in ancient forests

during medieval times, but filtered through the console of a late 1960s UK recording studio. It's similar to other otherworldly albums by cult legends of the era such as Jan Dukes De Grey, Black Widow and acoustic demons Comus.

Apocalyptic winds and eerie chanting start the journey to this enigmatic debut album by the strangely named Dorset clan of jazz-influenced folk hippies. Occult vibes weave in and out of mystical tunes, where dark pastoral backdrops collide with psychedelic sparks and early-prog motifs. Tasteful use of flute and keyboards add mesmeric layers to their signature style. Witchy female and male vocals are rich in presence and suit the music perfectly. Musicianship is exceptional

'Apocalyptic winds and eerie chanting begin this enigmatic debut.'

throughout, and the rather murky production adds to its strange allure.

Seven-minute opener *Dorian Deep* is a moody prog epic with shuffling, military-esque processional rhythms, which move through hard and lighter passages featuring weird organ and enchanting flute. Excellent lead guitar work from Dave Laverock is consistent throughout. And *The Eagle Chased The Dove To Its Ruin* follows suit, but kudos must be given to jazz influenced drummer Mike Fouracre, whose often ultra-fast playing pre-dates thrash by well over a decade.

Facilis Desencus Avern (*Easy Is The Descent Into Hell*) closes the album in grand style, a fascinating promotional clip, which captures the aura of the band perfectly, can be seen on YouTube. **LD**



WELCOME BACK

Needtobreathe

Navigating the 'Christian band' tag, learning from Taylor Swift, and their ongoing quest to make 'big' music.

FOR 22 YEARS these Grammy-nominated South Carolinian rockers have built a serious following with their singalong heartland rock and hard-touring work ethic. They've regularly topped the US Rock, Alternative Rock and Christian Albums charts, and now opulently produced, anthem-heavy ninth album *Caves* is doing the business. Singer Bear Rinehart talks ambition, the "Christian thing", and lessons learned from Taylor Swift.

You've said *Caves* is an "ambitious album". In what way?

These days in music, cheap is the new expensive – everything is deconstructing to nothing. But we love records that were big, where bands put everything in there, so we thought, what if we just went all the way and just made ourselves happy? Listening back to *Caves* it feels like that, feels big. We really went for it.

You've always had a catchy edge, and that has really been amped up on the new record.

Yeah, we've always wanted people to like the music. We built ourselves up as a live band, and didn't want people looking at their shoes when they're at our show. But this record's less about the commercial success and more about allowing ourselves to do it. I always hear the song *How Wonderful We Are* and think Steven Tyler's singing it, you know? We thought: "What if we just did this like Aerosmith?"

That track and *Temporary Tears* are both testimony to the band's southern soul vibe.

That stuff just seeps in. We grew up in a very small town in South Carolina, my dad was a preacher in a diverse church with loud music, where I learned to play. The gospel thing with rock'n'roll elements

added, that's always been what's turned me on. Early on my favourite band was The Black Crowes, and favourite singer was Joe Cocker. That 'feverish' thing is what we're after.

The Christian angle must be tricky for a rock'n'roll band to navigate?

Yeah. The Christian thing's been very commercialised, especially in America. We hate it when people say: "You're a Christian band", because sadly the term really just means you suck! But as for faith,

that story's playing out in my life all the time, with my kids and my wife, and the way we treat our people on the road. That's incredibly valuable.

You supported Taylor Swift on a stadium tour twelve years ago. What did you learn from that?

We learned a lot about what we did and didn't want. She may be the hardest-working, most consistent musician I've ever been around. We're not the kind of band that's gonna rehearse exactly what we're gonna say in an empty arena, then say it that night. But she is, and that's to her credit, because all those audience members get the best show every night from her. We're a little more freewheeling.

You're touring *Caves* from September. Which records end up on the tour bus or dressing room stereo?

Before every show we have a twenty-minute pre-game thing. Our piano player Josh [Lovelace] DJs, stuff like Skynyrd, Black Crowes, and any of the Kings – Freddie, BB, Albert. But we just listened to the latest Post Malone record, and when Beyoncé has a new one we'll take it in together. We all love music still, which is such a blessing, because it's not true with every band. **GM**

Caves is out now via *Drive All Night*.

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02/07 Basingstoke	The Anvil
02/09 Bath	Theatre Royal
02/09 Bath	Forum
02/10 Cardiff	Bridgewater Hall
02/12 Glasgow	
02/14 Birmingham	
02/15 Sheffield	
02/17 Cambridge	
02/18 Norwich	
02/19 Manchester	



★ HIGH HOPES

Geese

|||||||
“We’re just internet-dwelling children who mostly like bands from the UK.”

For these prodigious New York noiseniks, it all began just as they were about to call it a day.

As soon as they decided to split up, Brooklyn’s Geese found themselves in great demand. Upon meeting in high school, the quintet – a stylish melange of all you’d expect of a quintessentially street-sharp New York City rock band – had happened upon an appealing strain of angularly-inclined, guitar-based concision (part-Velvets, part-Television, part-Strokes) while thrashing about in their drummer’s basement.

With separate college courses hovering over the near horizon, the band spent their final year of school cobbling together a self-produced farewell recording for posterity. Upon its completion, at the exact moment Geese expected to disband, their simultaneous debut/swansong instituted a wholly unexpected record company bidding war. In the midst of a global pandemic.

“It was a weird time,” recalls vocalist Cameron Winter. “Labels started discovering us just as the pandemic picked up. So one part of my life was going to heights I’d never anticipated, even as all the other parts were crumbling completely.”

Much to the chagrin of several sets of parents, Geese never made it to college. Then again, courtesy of covid, they didn’t exactly make it out on the road either. In demand but still unsigned, their red-hot debut album (ultimately released as *Projector*) languishing in the the can, Geese – completed by

guitarists Foster Hudson and Gus Green, bassist Dominic DiGesù and drummer Max Bassin – set to work writing material for their second album, *3D Country*. Being shackled to the studio wasn’t without its frustrations, but neither was it without its advantages: “Not being able to play gigs probably saved us,” Cameron admits, “(Labels) had to go off our painstakingly edited studio recordings. If they’d seen us play a show they’d have realised ‘these kids have no actual idea what they’re doing.’”

During lockdown, Geese drilled themselves into quite the crack band.

With a two-year buffer within which to hone their songwriting chops they crafted an assured successor to the intuitive art-rock of *Projector*. *3D Country* adds soulful maturity to Geese’s intrinsic edginess, and as the Green/Hudson guitars seamlessly entwine (never lapsing into haphazard blues-based noodling cliché), Winter’s unmistakable vocal sparks with stratospheric levels of dramatic affectation. “This album might end up being the craziest my vocals ever get, because I’m starting to see the value of deploying craziness a little more sparingly... Trying to get as dumb as possible without reaching the threshold of stupid.”

So what are Geese? Many have called them post-punk. “I wasn’t even alive for the post-punk revival,” smiles Gus. Ah well, maybe they’re just brilliant. But are they mainstream ready?

“Totally!” blurts Gus, “I want a snazzy beach house before I’m thirty-five.” **IF**

3D Country is out now on Partisan Records.

FOR FANS OF...



Despite Geese’s angular concision echoing The Strokes’ *Is This It?* (see also: Velvet Underground/Television/Voidoids) they’re not just another dual-guitared skinny-tied Manhattan scene band. Cameron: “We had no real connection with the city. We’re just internet-dwelling children who mostly like bands from the UK.”

Fleetwood Mac

The Chain

How a song forged from disparate scraps came to represent the decade-spanning resilience and staying power of Fleetwood Mac.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

I think anyone who creates will tell you that it's very difficult to work completely linearly to get what you're after," Lindsey Buckingham has said of *The Chain*. The only song credited to all five members of Fleetwood Mac's 1977 line-up, *The Chain* was assembled with disparate links and spare parts and a lot of arranging ingenuity. Recorded during a period of romantic break-ups and high tension within the band, it has come to represent the remarkable endurance of one of rock's most volatile bands.

It began in 1976, during the sessions for the *Rumours* album. Christine McVie brought in a song-in-progress called *Butter Cookie (Keep Me There)*. On the Super Deluxe Edition of that now classic album, you can hear the song evolve through early demos and instrumentals. A feathery, Van Morrison-like groove gives way to a swampier chug, as the band search for the right feel and Christine McVie experiments with words. But it never quite rises above what might have become a solid album track. Then in the last minute it suddenly roars to life, powered by the entrance of John McVie's memorable low-end bass riff.

Drummer Mick Fleetwood called that thematic riff "a major contribution." He said: "*The Chain* basically came out of a jam. It was put together, as distinct from someone literally sitting down and writing a song. It was very much collectively a band composition."

As producer, Buckingham cited two inspirations for the process of assembling the song. Brian Wilson and his classic Beach Boys track *Good Vibrations* was an obvious comparison. The other one was more surprising.

"[Film director] Alfred Hitchcock, I gather, worked in a similar way," Buckingham told BAM in 1981. "He would totally preconceive every scene and then try to get it as close as he could to that. I do that too, in some ways. You hear something in your head and you try to get as close as you can. At the same time, the more you work with music—or art, for that matter—the more you learn that you

have to let the work lead you to a certain extent. It has to be give and take, and there are always going to be a certain number of unknowns that you'll have to deal with."

Counting backwards from the entrance of McVie's bass riff, the band first mapped out a new front section, measure by measure, with Fleetwood's bass drum acting as metronome. Buckingham then imported a finger-picked riff from *Lola (My Love)*, a song from 1973's *Buckingham-Nicks* (the album that effectively got him and Stevie Nicks hired to join Fleetwood Mac in the first place). That riff bounced perfectly against the four-on-the-floor pulse, clearing an open space for the striking three-part harmony vocals—*'Listen to the wind blow...'*

"But it really only became a song when Stevie wrote some words," Fleetwood said. "Lindsey arranged and made a song out of all the bits and pieces that we were putting down onto tape. And then once it was arranged and we knew what we were doing, we went in and recorded it. But it

ultimately becomes a band thing anyway, because we all have so much of our own individual style, our own stamp that makes the sound of Fleetwood Mac."

Of course, because this is Fleetwood Mac we're talking about, there is a conflicting account of the song's construction. In a 2020 interview with *Variety*, Nicks said it wasn't just "some words" that she brought to the table, but a completed song. "Lindsey asked me: 'You know that song that you wrote about *'If you don't love me now, you will never love me again'*? Can we have that?' Because we have this amazing solo that's at the end of it, when John comes in with the bass line. But we don't really have a song. Would you consider letting us have that song?"

Nicks continued: "And I thought, wow, I had full-on plans for the original song before I gave it to Fleetwood Mac. But I thought: 'Well, okay, I will take one for

the team here, and I will give you the song. I mean, I'm really glad that I gave it to them, because it turned into one of our best songs. But it was holding its own before they recorded it."

Nicks also considered it to be a valuable songwriting lesson: "It's a good way to see where songwriters go, you know, and how they can have something that's really pretty on its way to being complete, and then something else comes along and they need part of it."

While the original recording of *The Chain* wasn't a hit, 20 years later a live version from *The Dance* made it to No.30. Meanwhile, the track attained a separate kind of fame in the UK when the bass riff-led end section was used by BBC television as the theme for their Formula 1 racing program (it was used from 1978-1996, then again from 2009-2015). In

"*The Chain* basically came out of a jam. It was put together, as distinct from someone literally sitting down and writing a song."

2017 *The Chain* was featured in the popular Marvel film *Guardians Of The Galaxy Vol. 2*. It has also appeared in HBO shows *Family Bonds* and *Our Flag Means Death*.

On Fleetwood Mac's 2019 world tour, with Neil Finn and Mike Campbell in the band in place of Buckingham, they opened every show with *The Chain*. It only accentuated the missing link (*'Never break the chain'*) of Buckingham's unexpected dismissal from the band.

While there had been some lingering hope that the original chain would be restored for one last Fleetwood Mac tour, Christine McVie's death in 2022 put an end to that. But the song remains to remind us, as McVie said in 1977, that "there is a heavy connection with the band and *The Chain*".

As Stevie Nicks said: "If you're in a band, you're part of a team." 🎧

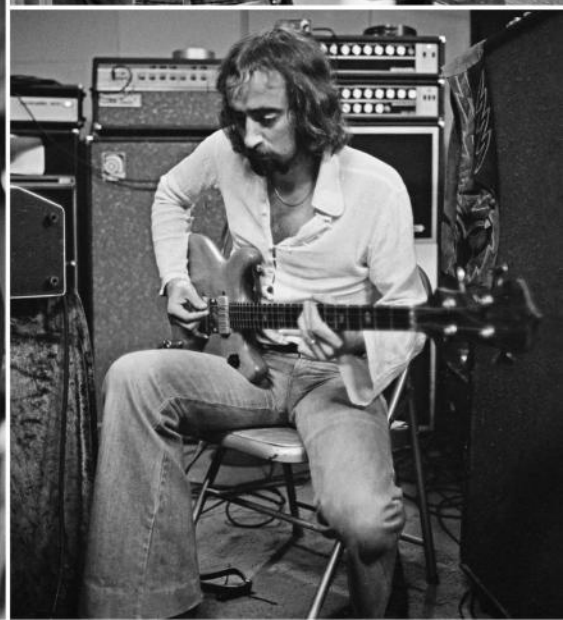


NEVER BREAK THE CHAIN

In 2019, Evanescence released a cover of *The Chain* that reimagined it as what lead singer Amy Lee described as "a dark and epic picture". Set against a wall of tribal drums, guitars and madly sawing orchestral strings, Lee's voice wails with emotion. "The lyrics make me feel the power of standing together against great forces trying to pull us apart, perhaps even from the inside," Lee said. "I really wanted to drive that home in our version." Evanescence's cover was included in the popular videogame *Gears Of War 5*.



THE FACTS
RELEASE DATE
February 1977
(on *Rumours*),
August 1997
(*The Dance*)
**HIGHEST
CHART
POSITION**
UK No.81,
US No.30
PERSONNEL
Lindsey
Buckingham
Guitars, Dobro,
vocals
Stevie Nicks
Vocals
Christine McVie
Hammond organ,
harmonium,
vocals
John McVie
Bass
Mick Fleetwood
Drums,
percussion
WRITTEN BY
Fleetwood Mac
PRODUCED BY
Fleetwood Mac
LABEL
Warner Bros



Danko Jones

The Danko Jones frontman on not going to festivals, not going out, not getting any awards and putting in the air-guitar hours.

Interview: **Polly Glass**

Since forming in 1996, Toronto's Danko Jones have thrived on volume—and on the visceral energy of being in rooms together. So when the pandemic forced them to make their previous album *Power Trio* entirely remotely, it paved the way for a new creative mode. “When I heard *Blue Jean, Denim Jumpsuit*, which was the first song we wrote apart from each other, it blew me away,” the titular frontman says. “It’s one of our favourite songs we’ve ever written. It had a groove, a bounce, everything in my head that I wanted to hear.”

Accordingly, their new album *Electric Sounds*, a fiery fistful of Motörhead-meets-Misfits punk’n’roll, was made in the same way (save a few jam sessions last summer).

We caught up with Jones in Budapest as the band hit the European festival circuit.

Can you remember the first festival you went to as a punter?

I don’t really go to them. The only one I ever did was the first Lollapalooza in Toronto, with Jane’s Addiction and Siouxsie And The Banshees and Butthole Surfers and Body Count. I admire everyone at festivals and I’m happy that everyone attends, but I am not made for that. I’m really... ‘a tight-ass’ is a nice way of putting it.

Festivals are quite a specific environment, to be fair.

Well, my nickname at home is the Great Indoorsman, if that tells you anything. I think a lot of musicians are. The fact that I perform the way I do was due to a lot of hours spent at home in my room listening to music, wanting to be on stage and playing air guitar. I heard that to get good at something you have to spend ten thousand hours on it, and I’m like: “I got that doubled with the air guitar.”

***Electric Sounds* opens with the lyric: ‘Guess who’s back? Me, motherfucker.’ Who are you singing that to?**

Good question. A lot of different groups. I mean, we live in an age of social media where anyone’s gonna lob over their uninformed opinion to anybody and everybody. Putting myself out there I’ve been subjected to a lot of comments, so that group. A lot of people who like our music already, that group. People who don’t like our music. I’m standing my ground when it comes to certain things, and I’m not leaving and no one’s scaring me away.

Good Time is a catchy, feelgood highlight. Besides rock’n’roll, what makes a good time for you these days?

Barbecuing. That really sounds like a shitty answer, but it’s a truthful answer. I’m pretty one-track-minded. My head is always into music and rock’n’roll and collecting records and trying to find new bands. Pretty much nothing outside of that really interests me.

In the accompanying video there’s a karaoke theme. Do you have a go-to karaoke number?

Candle In The Wind. I’ll do *Ebony* and *Ivory* if they’ve got that in the rotation, but usually it’s *Candle In The Wind*.

You released a TikTok video in which you pointed out that

Danko Jones have been around for twenty-seven years and never won a music award.

I said: “We’ve been around for twenty-seven years, and we’ve never won a music award... but we still make records to tour and promote it!” It’s kind of a little poke at music awards in general. They always get it wrong. The right bands are always ignored. And behind the scenes, from what I’ve observed, it’s really just a big ad for big labels to push their newest product. Having said that, if we ever win one I’ll get up on stage and thank everyone.

In the same video you said: “Most musicians have ignored career advice from friends and family for so long, that they’re afraid to lose face... and are now crossing their fingers and hoping for the best.” What sparked that?

I’ve felt that at certain points before we started touring. We were a band for six years before we put out a full length; we were putting out seven-inches and EPs, and they were sticking and we were getting radio play at home, but nothing like enough to quit your job and go on the road for the rest of your life. So I was dealing with these thoughts every six to twelve months, you know: “When are you going to stop this charade and get a real job?”

Could see yourself living anywhere other than Canada?

Sweden is a place where our record label that we were on [Bad Taste Records] for years and years [was based], so we ended up spending a lot of time there. I know Stockholm better than any other city that we toured in, so I could probably live in Stockholm.

You’ve got Radkey, another fiery, punk-infused trio, joining you on your UK and continental Europe dates this winter.

I heard their first or second album and I saw who was playing it, these three brothers, and I was like: “This is *amazing*.” The guy sounded a bit like Danzig. They had some Misfits thing. It seems like it’s gonna be a fun tour and everybody’s going to be cool. We’ve been lucky with bands like Giuda, Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovel, The Biters, Radkey... awesome opening bands that we’re proud of and I’m a fan of, and I buy their records.

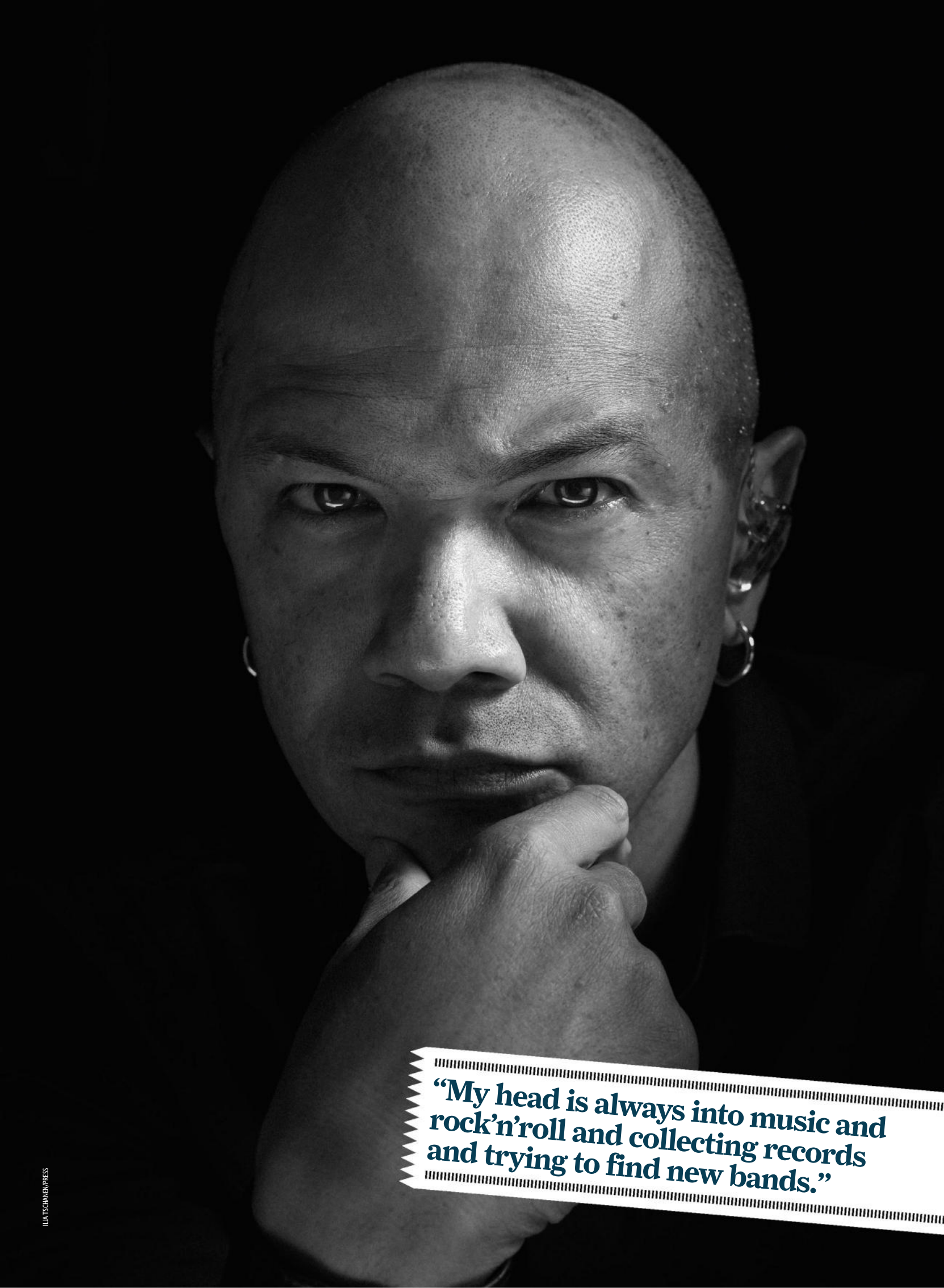
You’ve long been a genuine champion for new and rising bands. Who do you rate at the moment?

The Linda Lindas are a good one. Stiff Richards from Australia. Jive Bomb. Sheer Mag. Lut from Norway, they’re amazing... That’s off the top of my head.

What would you tell a kid wanting to start out in music today?

Buy records. And when you think you’ve bought enough, buy more — obviously if your wallet allows. Even the act of buying the record, not just streaming it, is a way of connecting with the music that I think is getting lost by a lot of people. If you put your hard-earned money towards an album, it makes you listen to it. 🎧

Electric Sounds is out now via AFM. Danko Jones tour the UK in December.



“My head is always into music and rock’n’roll and collecting records and trying to find new bands.”



Saint Agnes

Their metal-meets-punk debut album is angry – very angry. They live for the stage, and that’s where they come alive.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

EAST LONDON-BASED rage-propelled quartet Saint Agnes have just unleashed *Bloodsuckers*, their ferociously therapeutic Spinefarm debut. A largely self-produced record, it combines metal fury with punk attitude, industrial intensity and raw emotion – in particular *This Is Not The End*, an extraordinarily powerful piece recorded in the wake of the sudden, unexpected passing of vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Kitty A Austen’s mother.

We caught up with Austen and Jon James Tufnell (guitar, vocals, bass) recently to discuss the on-going passion of Saint Agnes. A matter of life and death? It’s way more important than that.

They don’t shoe gaze.

Saint Agnes’s creative core came together as a direct reaction to the sonic complacency of the prevailing rock scene. “We were two lost souls,” says Tufnell. “In different bands, looking for a musical match. We got chatting and discovered a shared passion for bands with real intensity.”

“It was ten years ago now,” Austen adds. “It was all psychedelia and shoe gaze back then, and while there’s a place for that, we both wanted to be in a bombastic, balls-out rock band.”

“It felt really rebellious to do that in London back then,” Tufnell says, smiling. “We had to tell people we were a psychedelic band to get gigs.”

Anger is their energy.

Austen has no doubt what feeds her scream: “A lot of anger. I’m an angry person, and there’s a lot in the world to be angry about. I’ve had a difficult time, particularly over the last couple of years. I’ve had some mental health problems, and my mum passed away unexpectedly. All that stuff channels into a rage that’s all over the new album.”

While *Bloodsuckers* is a very angry record, it’s also very joyous.

“When you’re facing the worst times,” Austen continues, “you enter a headspace where you’re also experiencing strange euphoric highs. So while the record is really, *really* angry it’s also full of hope.”

What you see is what you get.

Austen the performer and Austen the interviewee might appear to be polar opposites, but the transformation that takes place at the microphone is more instinctive than deliberate.

“I never adopt a persona, that’s just the part of me that comes to the fore when I perform. As soon as

I hit the stage, the cocky, arrogant, angry and powerful part of me comes out. I’m always the best version of myself in that kind of do-or-die situation.”

“I see this happen up-close,” says Tufnell, “And it’s an instinctual part of entering the mind-set necessary to delivering this music. The music and the band matters so much to us that it is do-or-die. You simply have no choice but to run in all guns blazing.”

All the world’s the stage.

Getting back on the road isn’t just about going back to work for Saint Agnes (the line-up is completed by drummer Andrew Head and bassist Ryan Brown).

“That bit on stage is the part where we’re actually living,” Austen states bluntly. “I’m just treading water until I get to do it again.”

“It’s our world,” says Tufnell. “We’ve created that world: we’ve created that sound; we’ve created the songs; we’ve created the lighting. It’s our world and we get to live in it. In normal life you’re living in someone else’s world, but we get to be in our world and thrive.”

They’ll drown you out.

“In my family I often felt like I didn’t have a voice,” claims strictly non-nepo baby Austen, the daughter of an “unfortunately unsuccessful” musician. “I was a small person in a family of big, strong characters, so singing and playing guitar was my way of having a voice within my family. I was a strange kid at school. I struggled to make friends, had quite a difficult time, but now, being on stage, it’s my stage now and no one can take it away from me. I think that’s why I’ve done it, just to have my voice amplified. Now I’m speaking through a PA, you literally have to listen to me.”

Bloodsuckers’ defining strength in adversity?

Artist’s own.

Bloodsuckers, crafted in the depths of bereavement, is unfiltered catharsis.

“I was in a surreal, otherworldly state, my emotions absolutely raw,” says Austen. “Me and my mum had a very difficult relationship, and when she died, god... Our relationship at that point cannot now be changed. Or improved. I had no control over that situation, but what could I control? The record. Which is why I tried to create something that would connect with people, to draw some light out of all the darkness, to honour our relationship.”

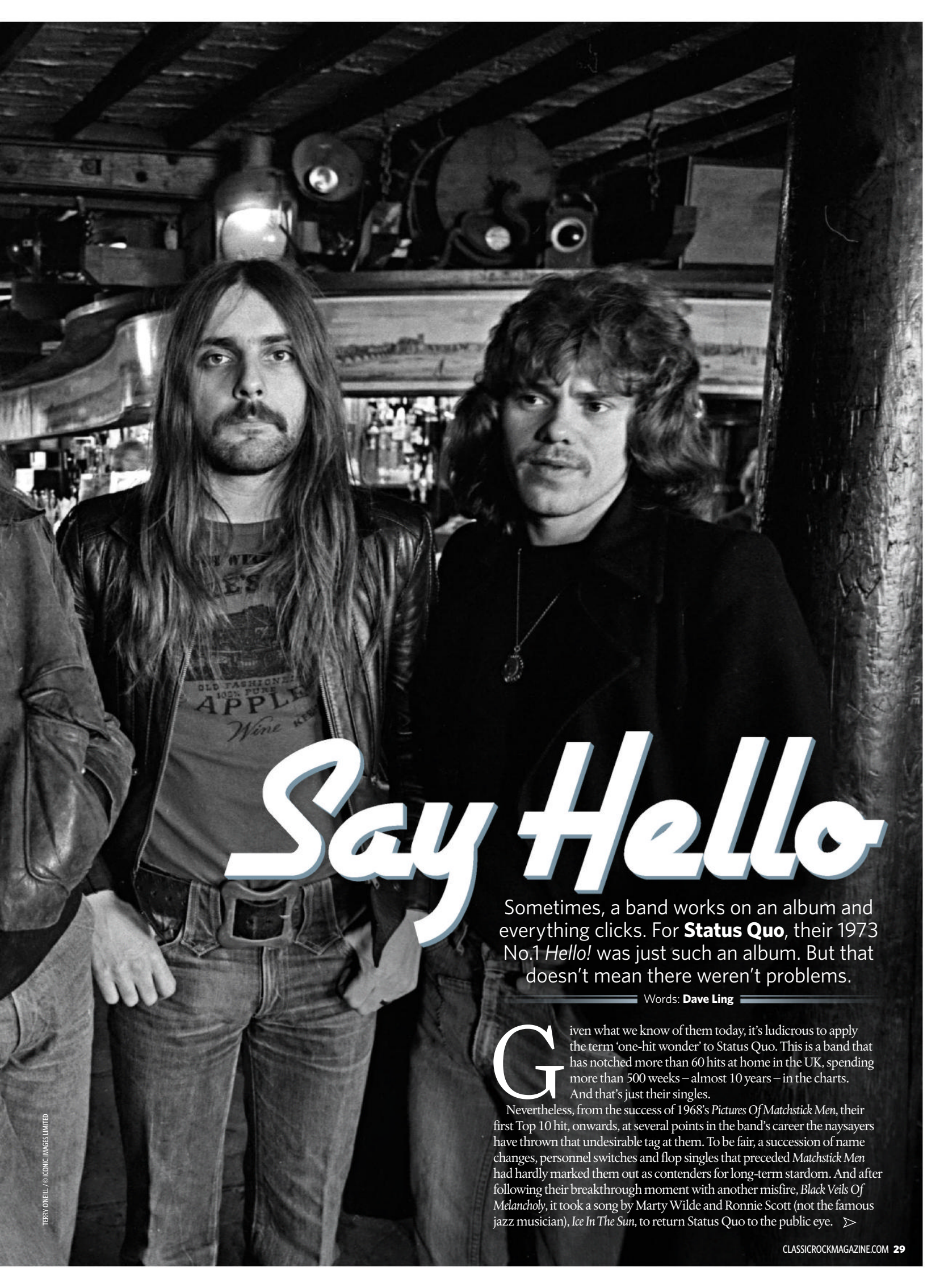
Bloodsuckers is out now via Spinefarm Records.



ROB BLACKMAN/PRESS







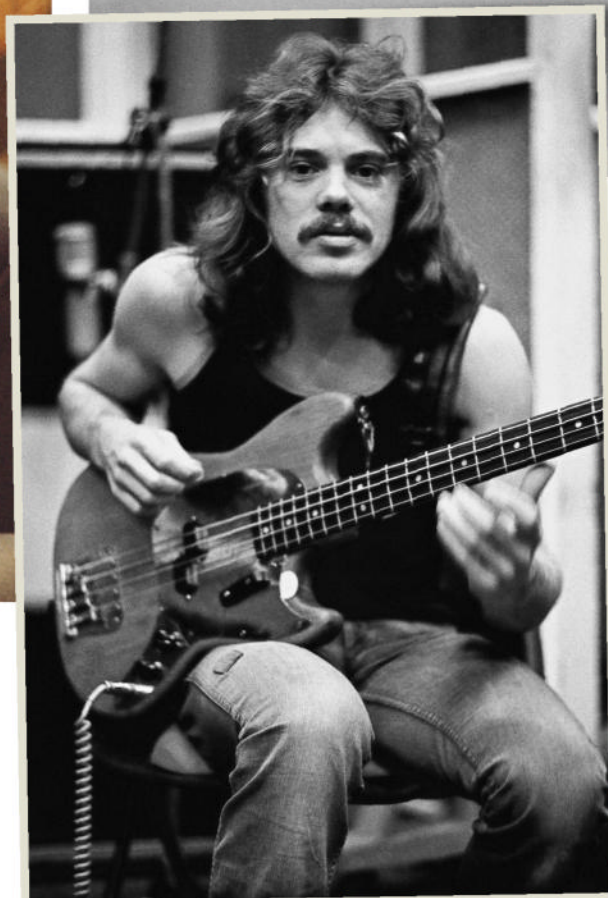
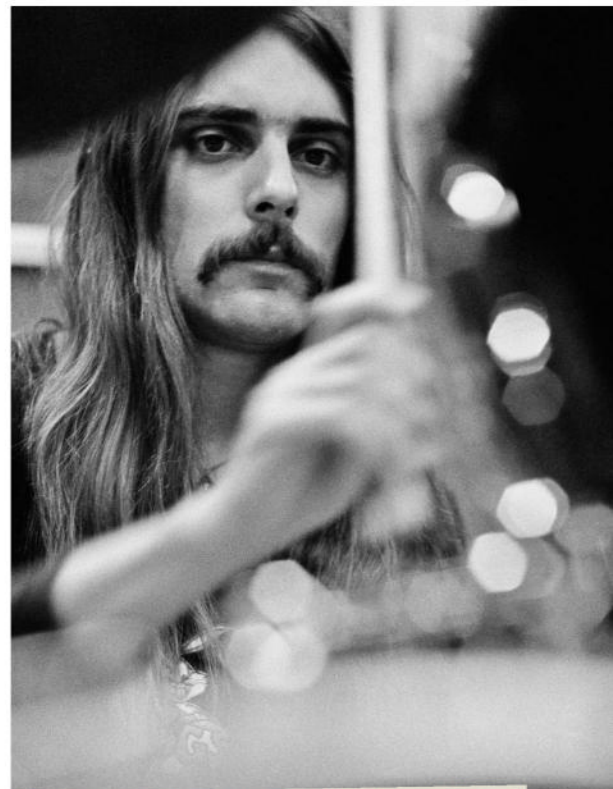
Say Hello

Sometimes, a band works on an album and everything clicks. For **Status Quo**, their 1973 No.1 *Hello!* was just such an album. But that doesn't mean there weren't problems.

Words: **Dave Ling**

Given what we know of them today, it's ludicrous to apply the term 'one-hit wonder' to Status Quo. This is a band that has notched more than 60 hits at home in the UK, spending more than 500 weeks – almost 10 years – in the charts. And that's just their singles.

Nevertheless, from the success of 1968's *Pictures Of Matchstick Men*, their first Top 10 hit, onwards, at several points in the band's career the naysayers have thrown that undesirable tag at them. To be fair, a succession of name changes, personnel switches and flop singles that preceded *Matchstick Men* had hardly marked them out as contenders for long-term stardom. And after following their breakthrough moment with another misfire, *Black Veils Of Melancholy*, it took a song by Marty Wilde and Ronnie Scott (not the famous jazz musician), *Ice In The Sun*, to return Status Quo to the public eye. ➤



Getting down (down) to work on the *Hello!* album at London's IBC studio in July '73: (l-r) Francis Rossi, John Coghlan (top), Alan Lancaster, Rick Parfitt.

"Cocaine wasn't an issue yet, and I'd gotten over groupies – I think we all had."

Francis Rossi

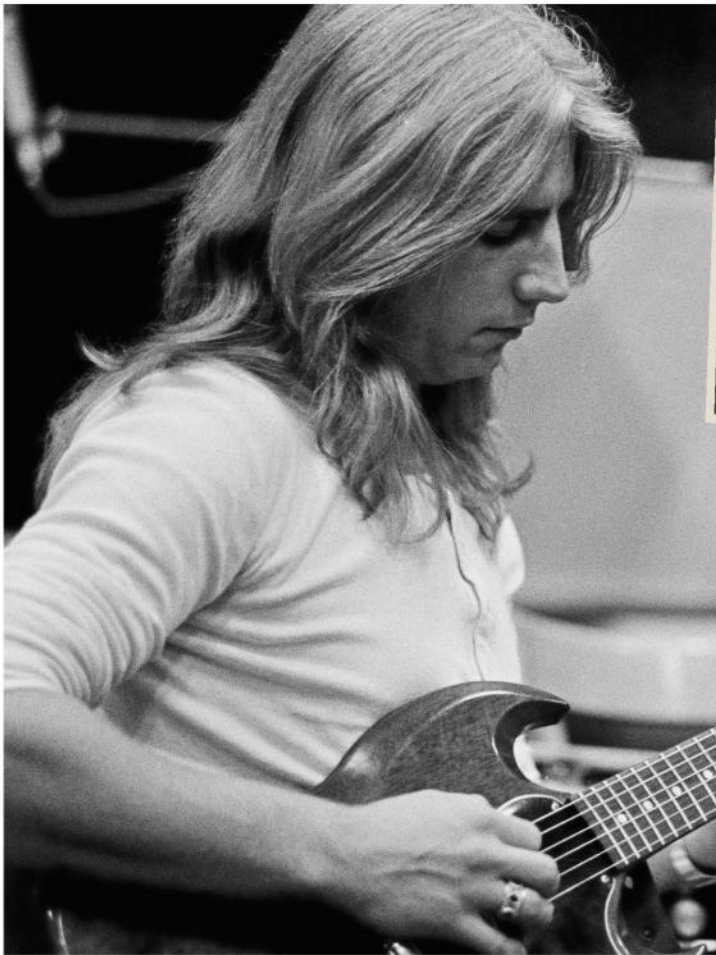
But Status Quo (or The Status Quo as they were still known then) were made of hardy stuff. Six years of hard graft were not going to be wasted.

The ditching of their Carnaby Street psychedelic clobber and the arrivals of guitarist/vocalist Rick Parfitt and road manager Bob Young, both of whom would contribute hits at key moments, helped to galvanise Quo, who dropped the 'The', grew their hair and wore the tattiest, grubbiest jeans. Twelve-bar boogie became the name of their game, performed with unapologetic zeal in dimly-lit pubs and clubs up and down the country. Audiences that didn't appreciate them were advised to fuck off as the band packed up and drove to the next venue. But many people

did get off on Status Quo's new direction, laid down on their third and fourth albums, *Ma Kelly's Greasy Spoon* and *Dog Of Two Head*. Although neither of those troubled the chart compilers, and the group's second keyboard player, Roy Lynes, ran out of patience on a train from London to Aberdeen in-between those two releases in August '70 and November '71 and left – thus reducing the line-up to lead guitarist/vocalist Francis Rossi, bassist/vocalist Alan Lancaster, guitarist/vocalist Rick Parfitt and drummer John Coghlan – against all the odds an unlikely industry buzz began to grow.

With sympathetic backing at last, and in spite of

an entanglement with Pye Records, their manager Colin Johnson persuaded Phonogram Records boss Brian Shepherd to sign Quo to his hip imprint Vertigo. Shepherd handed over a budget of £30,000 and entrusted the quartet to self-produce an album with just an engineer, Damon Lyon-Shaw, and his assistant, Richard Manwaring. The result was *Piledriver*, an album that matched its title with a shrewd distillation of tight, hard boogie and hook-friendly melodies. Its turbo-charged anthem *Paper Plane* returned Quo



“At IBC Studios we were pretty wonga-ed – there was some smoking going on – but they were such creative times.”

Rick Parfitt

to the Top 10 of the singles chart, and the album climbed to No.5. Within months Quo went from a support band to headlining two nights at London's celebrated Rainbow Theatre, and even testing the waters for the first time in the US (where they shared stages with, among others, Savoy Brown, Canned Heat, Manfred Mann's Earth Band and Blue Öyster Cult), Australia and New Zealand.

Such mental fortitude and sheer will to overcome was little short of remarkable. But then just six months later, Status Quo had to do it all over again, or face the fact that those who had dismissed them as a one-trick pony had been right after all. And there was absolutely no chance that was going to happen.

Vertigo sent the band back to where they'd made *Piledriver*, IBC Studios in Central London. The bunker-like, windowless facility, with its high ceiling, fostered an environment of hard work, and had been used by many of the world's biggest stars including The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, The Who and the Small Faces. Quo would record all of their early-70s albums there.

Producing themselves again, and reunited with Lyon-Shaw and Manwaring for technical support, they began work at IBC in mid-April '73 on what would become *Hello!*. The place was theirs for a month, with some 'tidying up' time put aside in the summer after a return trip to North America.

Francis Rossi: After *Piledriver* had taken off the way it did, with *Hello!* we set out to do the same thing but at a higher level. The sound improved somewhat, and the band were better through all of the time spent on the road. Yeah, we felt some pressure in making a follow-up, but there was this cocky confidence that came out of Rick and mainly Alan that really pushed us forwards.

Rick Parfitt: At IBC Studios we were pretty wonga-d – there was some smoking going on – but they were such creative times. All four of us were seeing things the same way. Life was fantastic back then. Our writing was prolific and everything was opening up for us.

We would arrive at, say, one o'clock in the afternoon and leave the following morning, unaware if there was daylight or darkness outside. You just buried yourself in the place and got creative. Those sessions will stay with me for ever – we played so loudly together. Who gave a fuck about the clock? We were still young; time didn't matter.

Alan Lancaster: The brilliant thing is that nobody could tell us what to do. The record company didn't get a say. Can you imagine what their reaction

to a song as over-the-top as *Forty Five-Hundred Times* [the album's 10-minute epic] would have been?

Parfitt: We had a stockpile of great songs, many from the road, [but we also] wrote in the bath, on the loo... We were bubbling over with ideas. All of the licks had yet to be written, and we were finding them day by day.

Rossi: The super-confidence that came from Alan and Rick served us well at the time, but for me [ultimately] it proved to be... not nice. Alan almost saw us as ambassadors to Great Britain. He had that in him till he died. Status Quo was so important to him – *overly* important, in a way that it never was for me. But we went into the studio believing: “Yeah, we can do this.”

Photographs of Quo working at IBC during the early 70s show Rossi, Parfitt and Lancaster seated in a circle, in close proximity.



Rossi: That's one of the reasons, good and bad, that the album sounded the way it did. Later on, when we did *Rocking All Over The World*, we worked the opposite way and everything was done in ➤





The legendary Frantic Four in '75: (l-r) Francis Rossi, John Coghlan, Rick Parfitt, Alan Lancaster.

reflective song, it was another reminder that, before its dissolution, the Rossi-Parfitt alliance invariably spelled greatness.

Parfitt: Those lyrics to *A Reason For Living* came from the heart. Some things were going wrong in my life and I was a bit depressed.

Rossi: That, to me, is when Rick was still Rick. He had such a great voice. The later stuff where he sang much more gruffly, that's not Rick. I liked it best when he used his voice in that [more melodic] way; it was such a big part of the band's early sound.

Parfitt: All these years later, that song still stands up, and I'm glad we re-did it on the acoustic album [*Aquostic*, 2014].

Young: You can hear that country influence on *And It's Better Now*. Francis and I always loved that style of music.

Rossi: I remember watching a TV programme about a really sad little fellow who'd been sent to boarding school. When he said that he had

“The brilliant thing is that nobody could tell us what to do. The record company didn't get a say.”

Alan Lancaster

a god of his own, I thought: “Fuck, I'm having that.” The riff ended up becoming the melody. I really liked it.

Blue Eyed Lady, once described by Parfitt, who wrote it with Lancaster, as “an out-and-out rocker that was a joy to have performed on the Frantic Four reunion tours”, was the first of many, many Quo tracks that featured Andrew Bown. The former keyboard player with Peter Frampton-fronted 60s pop band The Herd, Bown (see boxout opposite) would work with Quo on and off before eventually becoming a permanent member.

Rossi: It was my idea to bring in Andrew on that song. I'd met him and Peter [Frampton] when we supported The Herd, and I really liked him.

Andrew Bown: The Herd and Quo knew each other for years. I remember at an awards ceremony, Francis being jealous that The Herd had a roadie.

Rossi [indignantly]: They had this bloke that we had thought was one of the band. We were thinking: “Who the fuck is he?” It really rubbed me up the wrong way. So we got one too.

Bown: All the bands knew each other back in those days. But more importantly, The Herd's management shared offices with Quo on Wardour Street.

Rossi: Later in life I find it less threatening to admit it, but I always liked that more feminine side [of rock music]. The thing that Freddie [Mercury] did. Andrew was somebody I thought I could

work with. It broadened out the sound with one instrument. Andrew and I spent a lot of time working out keyboard parts and became very close.

Bown: I had almost forgotten that I had played on *Blue Eyed Lady*. So listened to it this morning and, sure enough, two minutes and forty-seven seconds in, there's piano [from me]. There's a fuck of a lot of notes in that song.

Rossi: There are also two saxophones [played by Steve Farr and Stewart Blandamer] on that song but you can't fucking hear them.

Forty-Five Hundred Times, the epic song that closes *Hello!*, is a triumph of light and shade. It begins gently before accelerating off into pure boogie-rock nirvana. The song became an instant live favourite, and was often jammed out to twice its original duration of fractionally under 10 minutes – sometimes even more.

Rossi: *Forty-Five Hundred Times* was worked on at my first mother-in-law's house, a prefab. We were trying to write a song with three movements, like we later did with *Slow Train* [from the following year's *Quo*]. Rick and I were in a bit of a Yankee phase, hence the title. In real English it would've been called *Four Thousand Five Hundred Times*, which doesn't quite work, does it?

Parfitt: Truthfully, I don't remember much about the writing of *Forty-Five Hundred Times*, because for a lot of the time I was away with the fairies.

Rossi: It was one of the last songs by me and Rick. Each time we thought we'd got something good, Rick would try to improve it and we'd end up losing track of where we were. It was like pulling teeth, which is among the reasons why we stopped writing together.

Parfitt: If something had potential, I always tried to make it better. Sometimes it worked, and others it didn't, but I pushed things to the limit. That didn't always sit well with Francis.

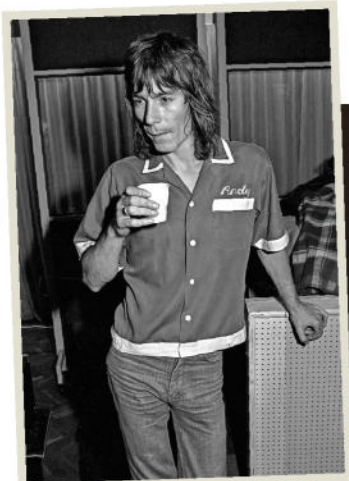
Rossi: I wish Rick and I could've continued, but it became too difficult. So many good things were lost when our egos clashed.

Young: Francis and I had a lot of involvement in that one, even though it's a Rossi-Parfitt song.

Bown: You know, I think I played on *Forty-Five Hundred Times* as well as *Blue Eyed Lady*. They asked me to play in B and jam for about fifty bars. I remember that very well. I think I got paid for it.

Rossi: Yeah, he did. It needed that extra embellishment. How did we find John Mealing, the guy who was credited with playing piano? I really don't remember.

Young: Recording the song at IBC was a real magic moment. When the band cooked in the ➤



Bown To Boogie

So who is Status Quo's keyboard player – y'know, the guy who some fans think ruined the band?

Bob Young considers him "the glue that held Status Quo together during some difficult times". But not everyone shares that opinion – to a very particular fan, his keyboards brought the much-loved Frantic Four to an end. Say *Hello!* to Andy Bown.

It's hard to believe that Hello! turns fifty this year. I had a blank about my first contribution, so I looked it up and I now realise, thanks to you, I haven't been with Quo for forty-six years, it's fifty. Fifty fucking years! There's much worse things I could have done with my time, but...

How did you come to join the band?

At first I preferred being as I was, still a hired gun. Quite early on, Bob told me: "You really should do this," but I didn't want to. I had my own thing going, and I didn't want to do Quo for ever. [Laughs at the irony]. And look at me now. But I did the right thing by joining them.

How did their offer come?

There wasn't really an offer. It just morphed, tied into the changing over of personnel. "You've got this share, and [if you join] you get a bigger share." There was never a conversation around: "Are you in or are you out?"

It's peculiar that nobody said to you: 'Welcome to the club'.

Well, it was very difficult. Francis really, really wanted me in because he thought I added something. He comes from more of a Jeff Lynne mind-set, sound-wise. Alan [Lancaster] didn't, he just didn't. He didn't really want anyone else in the band. So there was a lot of trouble there. But he [Rossi] is Italian; he doesn't really take no for an answer, and in the end he got his way.

Although you were not 'officially' a band member until 1981, the increased role of keyboards from Rocking All Over The World in 1977 onwards changed the course of the band.

That was a seminal moment. It was the first album I was involved in from the start because it wasn't happening, apparently. Pip [Williams, producer] told me that. I got a call asking: "Can you come to Sweden now? This afternoon?" Pip asked whether I had an intro for the title track, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Things changed very quickly. We had played

the Glasgow Apollo [in 1976, recorded for the following year's double album *Live*]. Five thousand blokes, all in denim. At that point you didn't see any women. The balcony nearly fell down due to the jumping.

Because of that sea change, to a very particular type of fan you are seen as the guy that ruined Status Quo.

[Sounding perplexed] I'm sorry. I am what? They've been going for forty-six years since I joined. Where do you think they've been playing, in pubs? Fuck off!

But would it bother you if somebody held that opinion?

Certain people might think that – the type of person that wears only denim, has quite a lot of tattoos and doesn't wash. We tended to lose some of them, but in their place we got twenty-five times more people, a much wider audience. I don't care. One of the great things about getting old is that you care less and less about the thoughts of others.

Along with current Quo bassist Rhino Edwards, you went to Hammersmith to see the first reunion from the Frantic Four. Did it feel strange?

Not really. Francis thought it was shit. Rick was the one that held it all together, because Spud [Coghlan] wasn't doing very well, and Nuff [Lancaster] could scarcely play at all.

Finally, what's your perspective on Quo continuing without Rick Parfitt?

You know, the reality is very different to the public perception. The truth is that we carried Rick for a year. He was on quite a lot of medication and wasn't in a good place.

You don't want us to print that, surely?

Oh, I thought you wanted the truth. Silly me.

But overall it feels good to continue?

It's been difficult, no doubt about that. There's been a lot of damage limitation. The original sound of the band was fifty-one per cent Rick Parfitt's guitar and the way he played. Now Richard Malone has come in and is playing better than the Rick of his latter days. People come to see us determined not to like us, and we change their minds. That's very satisfying.



Status Quo firing on all cylinders in '73.

studio it was every bit as exciting as when they went for in on stage.

The album's title was suggested by the band's manager, Colin Johnson. Its artwork also introduced a logo that, just like the silhouette of the group's four members, guitars and sticks raised aloft, which graced its front cover, would decorate denim jackets and waistcoats for decades to come.

Released on September 28, 1973, *Hello!* displaced *Sladest*, by the band's good friends Slade, at No.1 and spent 28 weeks in the UK chart. It was the first of Quo's four UK No.1 albums. Emotions were mixed as they reached the summit for a second time. However, with *Hello!* all four band members knew they had created something special.

Rossi: Colin Johnson had so many brilliant ideas, and he didn't receive enough credit for that. He was not only a manager. Colin re-mortgaged his house and did everything within his power to make Status Quo a success. He truly, truly believed in us. Each night, we'd walk on stage and I'd say: "Hello", and he recognised the power of that.

Young: The cover's simplicity made it so eye-catching. The silhouette and the logo said everything you needed to know.

Rossi: I did love the cover, but later on [in post-*Spinal Tap* years] I liked it a bit less for the whole 'none more black' thing [guitarist Nigel Tufnel's infamous comment on the cover of his band's *Smell The Glove* album].

Parfitt: At the time of *Hello!*, we were out on our own and we knew it. It felt as though Quo were getting bigger by the hour. We suddenly realised that we were the band of the moment. We really didn't think that anyone could touch us.

Lancaster: It's one of my favourite Quo albums, if not *the* favourite.

Parfitt: *Hello!* is my favourite of our albums and I love everything about it – the cover, the content, and also the fact that it took us to the top of the charts for the first time.

Coghlan: It's classic Quo, isn't it? There's not a bad

realise they need to make another album. Quo's next record, the balls-to-the-wall *Quo*, was released just eight months later.

Rossi: Cocaine wasn't an issue yet, and I'd gotten over groupies – I think we all had. The thrill of a record you'd made being played and enjoyed by so many people was what I appreciated. I loved the way records used to sell. Now, of course, music doesn't mean as much. Coming out of *Hello!* and into *Quo*, that was a problem because they [Parfitt and Lancaster] didn't want that shit that me and Bob had been writing.

Parfitt: Francis had drifted off in a different direction, a little more countrified. I wasn't having any of that. I preferred hard rock. Nuff [Lancaster] is from the leather wristband-and-spikes brigade. I wouldn't go that far, but like him I was a rocker, and I loved to write those harder songs.

Rossi: I'm not saying Quo didn't contain some really good songs,

though you knew [Rick and Alan] had been out watching other groups – mainly Deep Purple. But *Hello!* was such an important album for us, it affirmed we could get to number one. Now it was all about the next transition. It's always been about chasing that carrot. I have nightmares about catching it, which would be a complete disaster. Catch your carrot and you're fucked. 🍌

Francis Rossi's *'Tunes & Chat' tour is on now, Quo's 'Official Archive Series Vol. 1 – Live In Amsterdam' is out now.*

Rick Parfitt and Alan Lancaster were interviewed in 2015. They passed away in 2016 and 2021, respectively.

“After *Piledriver* had taken off the way it did, with *Hello!* we set out to do the same thing but at a higher level.”

Francis Rossi

track on it, and most of them went on to become live favourites.

Rossi: *Hello!*? Nice record. Very proud of it. But I got over [the success] quickly and wanted to know what was next. There's rarely any time to savour things. When they told us we were number one I probably replied: "Yeah, but has it done the same thing anywhere else?"

When a band becomes a chart-topper, that's when the big numbers start kicking in – rocketing record sales and gig attendances – along with lots more waiting around in airports, groupies and drugs. Then they

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INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE

Disillusioned with much of modern music and its presentation, **Creeper** up the drama and the slap and take things over-the-top with their new goth-rock vampire opera album.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Will Gould, aka William Von Ghould, aka the singer with goth-punk bloodsuckers Creeper, is getting lost in alcohol and the mythology of rock'n'roll. It's 3pm on a Wednesday afternoon, and we're sitting in a bar called Disorder in his adopted home city of Manchester. He picked the bar because it's named after the opening song on Joy Division's *Unknown Pleasures* album, although you can throw a dart in Manchester and hit a bar that's named after a Joy Division song. We're three pints deep – or is it four? – into a drinking session that will continue for a few more hours and several more pints, and he's in full swing.

"Where has all the character in music gone?" he's saying, with a passion that's only partly fuelled by alcohol. "Jesus Christ, there's only so many times you can see someone wandering on stage in the clothes they were wearing to Tesco that morning. People talk about how brilliant it was that grunge wiped out hair metal. Listen, hair metal was *way* more fun."

It should be noted that Gould is currently clad hair-to-toe in black. His hair is the colour of a funeral hearse, his eyebrows are artfully shaped into a low, vampiric 'V', and his midnight tan has been given a touch of life by the make-up he applied just before he left the 18th century former church he lives in. It wouldn't be a surprise to see him wandering around Tesco dressed exactly like this.

He's a living billboard for Creeper's third album, *Sanguivore* (a carnivore consumes meat, a sanguivore consumes blood). It's a fantastically feverish 1980s goth-rock vampire opera with puncture marks on its neck and drama in its heart. Guitars chime, piano chords crash, synths pulse and choirs exult. The reference points come thick, fast and knowing: *Floodland*-era Sisters Of Mercy, *Phantasmagoria*-era Damned, *White Wedding*-era Billy Idol, *Mother*-era Danzig, cult late-80s fang flick *Near Dark* and its florid early-90s counterpart *Interview With A Vampire*. Oh, and Jim Steinman. Especially Jim Steinman.

"He created something that was even larger than the music he wrote, he created worlds to live in," says Gould, who fell in love with *Bat Out Of Hell* after plucking it from his parents' record

collection as a kid. He reels off the names: "Meat Loaf, *Bat Out Of Hell*, *Bad For Good*, Bonnie Tyler, Pandora's Box..." (he's possibly the only person to have mentioned the latter, Steinman's one-off all-female group, in the past 30 years).

Sure, it might all sound like the ultimate in 'I ♥ The Alternative 80s' cosplay, but Gould knows this and has imbued *Sanguivore* with a ridicule-proof heroism that Steinman himself would be proud of. Plus it feels like nobody's made a record that's as shamelessly, brilliantly over-the-top since the 1980s anyway.

But then Creeper have traded in the over-the-top since they emerged from the DIY punk scene in their native Southampton in the early 2010s. Back then they came on like a Happy Shopper My Chemical Romance, all swept-over fringes and baggy black T-shirts. But Gould did brilliant things. Such as staging an actual funeral parade for their old songs at a London show a week before the

midnight body snatching and thwarted redemption. It's packed with jugular-penetrating 'cannibal babies' and deathwish-holding 'Armageddon girls', bringing every Anne Rice fan's teenage vampire fantasy to exhilarating life. Or death.

"Anyone who feels like an outsider can relate to that imagery," says Gould. "When you don't fit, when you feel like you're from somewhere else, when people laugh at you for being a bit weird, there's something alluring about it."

The drinks are still flowing, oiling a conversation that ranges from Gould's fascination with UFOs to his friendship with The Damned (Dave Vanian and Patricia Morrison's kid is a fan, leading to the latter appearing on Creeper's last album) to the genius of Scott Walker, Morrissey, *Avalon*-era Roxy Music and, indefensibly, *Tonight*-era David Bowie. At some point we reconvene to a nearby pub that's

half Rover's Return and half hipster hangout. We sit in the beer garden, where he can smoke a steady chain of cigarettes while eulogising the life-affirming beauty of 70s punk and bemoaning the fact that magazines don't dish out bad reviews any more.

"Sometimes I wish somebody would say something bad about our

albums," he says, with the kind of bulletproof confidence that leads to outrageous concept albums about doomed vampire love that sound like that greatest record Meat Loaf and The Sisters Of Mercy never made together.

No you don't.

"Yes." He sucks on his cigarette. "Yes I honestly do."

He leaves to fetch another drink, and then another. At some point a bunch of his tattoo artist friends arrive. Things look like they're going to get messy, and the sun's going down soon anyway. It's time to leave. Gould stands to offer a wobbly hug.

Earlier, he said: "All my favourite stories are where a bunch of freaks come together and make something brilliant, regardless of whether the world understands it or not."

Somewhere, Jim Steinman is sitting up in his grave and applauding. ●

Sanguivore is out now via Spinefarm

"People talk about how brilliant it was that grunge wiped out hair-metal. Listen, hair-metal was *way* more fun."

Will Gould

release of their 2017 debut album, *Eternity, In Your Arms*. Or killing the band off on stage at London's Koko a year later with the words: "Not only is it the last show of this album, but it's the last show that we'll ever do" – the exact same phrase David Bowie used to permanently retire Ziggy Stardust at Hammersmith Odeon in 1973, which is either the dumbest or ballsiest move in history.

"Oh, it was *clearly* a Bowie reference," says Gould. "But at that moment, I didn't feel like David Bowie, I felt like someone trying to uphold the mythology of rock'n'roll." (Naturally, Creeper returned from the dead to deliver their arty, glammy, Britpoppy second album *Sex, Death & The Infinite Void* – a record he believes was literally "cursed", by the way).

Sanguivore keeps their end up on that front. It's an epic concept album about two vampire lovers, Spook and Mercy, whose relationship plays out against a backdrop of 100mph car crashes,







Je ne regrette rien

He's a lauded blues guitar hero and much more, but **Joe Bonamassa** is no stranger to self-doubt. We met him ahead of a scorching show in a French castle, reflecting on an unusual life, audience expectations and finding happiness with his lot.

Words: **Polly Glass** Photos: **Christie Goodwin**

It's almost 9.30pm, and Joe Bonamassa has vanished. The night air is hot. We're in the wings at Théâtre Jean-Deschamps, a vast open-air amphitheatre inside the 13th-century citadel of Carcassonne, a hilltop town in the Languedoc region of southern France. Barely half an hour ago Bonamassa was sitting here on a flight case, Diet Coke in one hand, cigar in the other, chatting to bassist Calvin Turner about this and that. The base-level confidence, perhaps, of someone who's been gigging professionally since childhood; a man who'd played with John Lee Hooker and BB King by the time he hit puberty.

"We could be talking about cymbal stands at nine-twenty-five p.m.," he says. "By the time I go on, that's it. I'm the other guy."

It's extraordinarily picturesque here. A gothic stone footbridge leads you over the River Aude from the bistro tables, cathedral bells and cheese shops of Carcassonne's old town. To reach the castle you ascend narrow, twisty streets past ornate balconies, 'Tabac' signs, and peach-coloured houses with tall windows and old wooden shutters. Cicadas scream into the heat. Shrill swallows dart overhead as the sun descends.

In the auditorium, seats are filling. Last night Tom Jones played here, the sounds of *Delilah* and *It's Not Unusual* drifting down the hill and through our hotel window. Tonight, it's Joe Bonamassa.

Suddenly the lights go down. The audience cheers. The band head out. From across the stage a swift, streamlined shape in Hugo Boss strides out. The gnarly soul-rock swagger of *Evil Mama* starts up. The suit faces the audience, sunglasses in place: a *Matrix* character with a Les Paul. It hides a great deal about him. The 'other guy' has arrived.

There are two things that tell you a lot about Joe Bonamassa, and they aren't his guitars or his suits. The first is the cigars he smokes.

A few hours pre-show, within the castle's high, stone walls, we find him sheltering from the heatwave, at the side of the stage, puffing on a freshly lit Corona. Crew members bustle with gear. In his baseball cap, comfy jeans and 'Umbria Jazz Festival' T-shirt, Bonamassa doesn't look all that different.

The cigar, and the Rolex on his wrist, hint at something else.

"I have an addictive personality," he reasons, as the sound of French jousting commentary booms over the wall. "I have five

hundred guitars, five hundred amps... Things escalate. In one way, cigar smoking is man's folly. Like that [indicates the one in his hand] you're taking thirty pounds, rolling it up and taking the lighter to it. But it's relaxing. Kenny Wayne Shepherd and I, we enjoy cigars. I think it's a forties thing."

So in your fifties it'll be...

"Pipe," he says, grinning impishly. "Like a calabash pipe. A nice Dunhill. If you're gonna do it, do it right."

The second thing is the shoes he'll wear tonight: simple blue-and-white sneaker/plimsoll things. Non-rock-star footwear that's surprising once you notice it – the suit tends to grab your attention first. It's a small detail, but the closest visual clue on stage as to his real self. A pragmatist. A guitar prodigy who, at twenty-five, was tour-managing his own shows, even giving himself a fake name.

"John Carson, 'don't call me Johnny!'" he recites, with the panache of an enthusiastic hustler. "So John Carson would advance the shows, I would do sound, I'd do monitors for the band. Every fibre of my being was dedicated to fiscally surviving yet another year. Can we keep this going? It was a fun time but it was also a very stressful time."

At forty-six, Bonamassa has the softened pose of someone learning to be comfortable in his own skin – still somewhat anxious that all this is here for

him. There are grey hairs at his temples. His voice is kind. He does things that most named artists don't do in interviews, like give you his full attention in a natural way, and ask the odd, casual question about yourself. In short he's surprisingly normal. Definitely a bit weird, but not in the dull, blues-robot way that some have made him out to be.

And he worries, terribly, about not being good enough. About a lot of things. The expectations of his fans. The many people it takes to "get this idiot on stage at nine-thirty p.m.". The perspective of age – and some tough love from close friends – has helped.

"So when I'm up there thinking that I should give everybody their money back because I'm so fucking horrible," he says, his large eyes down. "If I listened to what I think is my worst show, and my best show, there's not much difference."

Sound-check is pain-free. The band gaze, impressed, at our medieval surroundings, looking nothing like their stage selves. Guitarist Josh Smith could be in a punk band, all long, baggy ➤

|||||
"I was never a wild person. I was never offered cocaine, ever, in my entire life."



Kings of the castle: Bonamassa and band sound-check at the Théâtre Jean-Deschamps in southern France.

“I have an addictive personality. I have five hundred guitars, five hundred amps. Things escalate.”

shorts and arms and legs full of tattoos. Backing singer Jade MacRae is cool and indie-ish in a Van Morrison T-shirt. Keyboard player Reece Wynans (formerly with Stevie Ray Vaughan’s Double Trouble) looks like a grandfather on holiday, in his North Face top, trainers, and socks with penguins on them.

They’re a tight group. MacRae and fellow backing vocalist Danni De Andrea are married to members of the crew. Smith is an old friend, who produced and co-steered Bonamassa’s new blues compilation *Blues Deluxe Vol 2* – a more soulful answer to the volume he released 20 years ago. Like Bonamassa, and their other good mate, blues guitarist Kirk Fletcher, he started young.

“We all love Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eric Johnson, we all started in our bedrooms,”

Bonamassa recalls, as the sound of horns and more jousting commentary soars over the battlements. “It’s funny, looking at it now. We’re not the elder statesman yet, but we were all the kid guitar players.”

Bonamassa grew up quickly, and strangely. Surrounded by adults and singularly focused on music, he’s had the odd, elevated life of a child star with a side of Catholic guilt. His parents kept him grounded. When he first met his manager, Roy Weisman, Weisman was 22 and Bonamassa was 12. They’ve been business partners ever since.

“I am kind of an eccentric. Except now,” he says, grinning, suddenly a 12-year-old boy again, “I have a credit card.”

His voracious collecting attests to this. Rooted in happy childhood days spent driving miles with his father (a vintage dealer) to collect beautiful instruments, it’s grown into something that rivals his music reputation. On tour, pre-show, he’ll drive out for hours to pick up a new purchase. In the US especially, people meet him at the back of the bus with guitars and family heirlooms. Most of them are fans, others just know him as a collector.



“It’s the chase,” he says. “I always enjoy that. None of my collection’s from eBay. To me it’s too easy. I don’t need a guitar, but I do collect stories. Y’know: ‘This was grandpa’s lighter, it’s been in the family eighty-five years.’ They’re selling you some of the last connection they have to a lost relative. That’s what makes collecting fun.”

Today he shows me an amplifier that cost as much as an Aston Martin. At home he has a gig poster sent by Buddy Guy to his parents, from a 1990 show that Bonamassa played at. It all fills his homes in LA, New York and Nashville.

“It’s not in piles, I’m not a hoarder,” he adds. “It’s well displayed, museum level. But it’s everywhere; the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen. People will see some of the rarest shit in the world, just in the atrium. I’ve got French presses next to an old RCA sign. It’s not for everyone. People come to my house and go: ‘Clearly you are not married...’” He pauses with a little half-smile. “But my girlfriend, she’s very good about it.”

Bonamassa cultivated these tastes earlier than most. As an 11-year-old netting up to \$300 a gig, he was given a stipend to buy ‘kid’ things, “but I would buy wah-wah pedals and more gear. When I got my record deal I bought a Sega Genesis system.”

Getting ready for showtime: “I suit up, pour a glass of wine, get into character”





Calvin Turner

Dannielle De
Andrea (left) and
Jade MacRae

Lemar Carter



Josh Smith



Reese Wynans



“Not everyone gets to the top of Everest. But you know what? Base camp’s pretty good.”

As the tours grew he spent less time in school and more time with tutors. He was tutored on and off from ninth grade. By twelfth grade he was working so much he effectively did all his schooling in about eight weeks.

The upshot of this was that he didn’t spend time with people his own age. All the usual social interactions, cliques and first dates of adolescence were bypassed. In place of school gym class, aged 17 Bonamassa had to join an actual gym, where he parked himself on an exercise bike and watched the OJ Simpson trial. “They had it on TV,” he remembers. “So I’m sitting there watching the OJ trial, pedalling the bike just clocking the hours...”

He stops for a second. “It was strange.”

The French jousting has stopped. Cicadas jabber loudly into the sunshine, and there’s the occasional clank of gear. Otherwise it’s quiet.

At the entrance fans accost him for autographs and selfies. Bonamassa signs everything, and chats companionably to one man he’s met before. Eventually his tour manager/friend Clay – a six-foot-something Georgia native with a look that’s part bodyguard, part bro-country singer – steers him away towards the catering area.

On sheltered tables there are dressed salads, local cheeses, charcuterie, fresh melon, desserts. Water and sodas are retrieved from fridges; it’s too hot for anything stronger. Bonamassa eyes up the plates. To stay in shape on tour, he tries to eat one meal a day.

“Because we have the Hollywood Bowl [show, coming up], I have a bowl of tomato salsa, two chicken breasts and a mixed salad,” he mutters grudgingly. “It’s about as fun as a root canal.”

The sun beats down brightly. They have a day off tomorrow; he doesn’t miss his formative years of 13 shows in a row, driving the van all day and lugging gear up stairs. Things that break a lot of people, if temptations don’t.

“I was never a wild person. I never did drugs. I was never offered cocaine, ever, in my entire life.” He considers this for a moment. “I’m slightly offended by it. I’m just not that guy, right?”

He remarks that he’s getting greyer. “If I start dying my hair, like, jet-black, there’ll be talks...” He pauses, considering this. “I think Metallica have aged well. James Hetfield’s really underrated as a rhythm player. His right hand is *serious*.”

Fellow Peter Green aficionado Kirk Hammett is a closer acquaintance. The Metallica guitarist is a neighbour of Bonamassa’s parents, for whom ➤



French connection: Bonamassa thrills another audience on his European tour.

he bought dinner on their forty-eighth wedding anniversary. “Kirk’s a sweet guy. He’s just a geek, like the rest of us.”

By the time we return there’s a crowd at the auditorium gates. The man they’re here to see treads cautiously behind them. “Look down, look down...” Joe mutters in our ear, as Clay smoothly leads us past the crowd and through the side barriers.

Back on the stage, flight cases of outfits are opened. Bonamassa has another cigar and surveys a rack of suits, of which he has about 30 on tour. Surely there’s some sort of deal in place with Hugo Boss by now? “You’d think, right?!” he exclaims in (half)mock-outrage.

By nine o’clock the sun is dipping. The auditorium is a sea of summer fabrics and fluttering fans. It could almost be a tennis crowd, until you notice the Bonamassa, Clapton, Fender, AC/DC, Hard Rock Cafe and other rock-friendly T-shirts dotted among the rows. The air is still hot. A hornet the size of a fist inches towards our feet.

Bonomassa re-emerges in suit trousers and shirt, adjusting his cuffs. “You want a water or something?” he asks. We’re good. He nods and disappears into his dressing room, built into one of the castle towers.

Inside it’s all circular stone walls, mirrors and low-lighting. An animal skin rug lies under two brown leather couches. A jug of lilies sits on a small table. On other surfaces there are water bottles, towels, kettle, coffee maker, a bottle of red wine and a glass. There are no guitars. He stopped warming up about six months ago. “I found I played better,” he reasons. “It’s a half-hour thing. I suit up, pour a glass of wine, get into character.”

Then suddenly it’s show time. Audience cheers swell as the band stride on stage and tear into a blazing *Evil Mama* and the outlaw-fringed blues rock of *Dust Bowl*. *I Want To Shout About It* –

originally by Ronnie Earl And The Broadcasters, and one of many lesser-known soulful cuts on *Blues Deluxe Vol. 2* – shows starkly how far Bonamassa has come as a singer since his throatier Vol 1 twenty years ago.

He still struggles with demons. His girlfriend (also a musician) persuaded him to start seeing a new therapist, telling him not to try to “outsmart” them (“I was doing that before”). Last year, in an interview with *Guitar Player*, he said he “hated” the way he played and sang. Carlos Santana phoned him to check he was alright.

Meanwhile, Joanne Shaw Taylor, an old friend, gave him some tough love and a hard shot of perspective. It was a real “reset”, he says. “It just got me out of this fog of self-doubt. Like, no matter what happens up there, it’s going to be fine. It’s not

“You see the looks on people’s faces, they’re seeing *The Matrix* character they’ve seen in magazines.”

life and death. The sun will rise again tomorrow if we don’t play tonight.”

On stage the heat starts to lift. Church bells chime and darkness falls over a genuinely stunning *Self-Inflicted Wounds*, Jade MacRae’s vocal solo adding extra spine-tingling value, like Clare Torry on Pink Floyd’s *The Great Gig In The Sky*. It’s the sort of original, bluesy rock epic that Bonamassa could fill whole sets with, were it not for people’s expectations of fast solos.

And there, perhaps, lies his real neurosis: an acute sense of responsibility, to just about everyone. His own standards. His fans. His family, to whom he’s quietly very devoted (he’s an uncle of two). His crew and company, “sending their kids to college” on the Joe Bonamassa dollar. Knowing that, at this point, he has little cause for

complaint but wrestling with insecurities anyway. Those dark moments of the soul that no one is immune to. These things that stop him straying, too far, from the persona he’s built.

“You start looking at it, like: ‘Well, maybe I’ll never do that folk record,’ or whatever. Because we’ve developed an audience. They want the fire and the fury. No matter how good it could be, they’d be like: ‘Just play the fucking guitar, man.’ I know that.”

Don’t you ever think that if you *did*, say, give your fans a folk record, they’d like it anyway, because they like you?

“Maybe,” he muses, as if it’s not something he’d considered. “Some of them, the true fans. But you know... what really makes my day is, by the end, they’re all standing. You see the looks on people’s faces, they’re seeing guitars they’ve seen in books, the *Matrix* character they’ve seen in magazines. And you’re going: ‘You know what? As campy as this shit can get sometimes, somebody likes it!’ The joy it brings people, that’s all I need.”

He has a point. They *do* go mad for the fretboard acrobatics in (Otis Rush cover) *Double Trouble*; the blistering rip through Led Zeppelin’s *Dazed And Confused* solo; the powerful shades of blues that pour through his fingers like water.

After the show tonight, they’ll drive on to more European dates. After that there’s the next Keeping The Blues Alive charity cruise. New Black Country Communion music in the works. More touring. It’s a lot to steer, for a guy who dreamed of playing guitar for a living.

If he could *just* play guitar in a band, for a day, who would it be with?

“Free,” he says simply, smiling.

“That’s the gig I was born to do. Free. Simon and Paul, call me. I’m your guy. I’ve been training for it my whole life. I know all those songs. That or

Bruce Hornsby.”

By rousing, blissed out closer *Mountain Time*, everyone in the auditorium is on their feet. The front rows sing back every word. Something seems to shift in Joe’s expression. For all the savviness and pragmatism in the Bonamassa empire, there is nothing pragmatic here. At its heart, music isn’t like that. It’s being in a moment. It *isn’t* a business transaction.

“Not everyone gets to the top of Everest,” he observed earlier. “But you know what? Base camp’s pretty good. I’ll play the same stage as Tom Jones any day.”

He looked around. “It’s nice here, you know?”

Blues Deluxe Vol. 2 is out now via Mascot/ J&R Adventures.

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THE
★CLASSIC★
Rock
INTERVIEW

JUSTIN HAWKINS

Fronting The Darkness gave the former advertising jingle writer fame, huge commercial success and a collection of catsuits, but that brought with it a downside that included an early band split and serious health issues. He tells *Classic Rock* all about it and more besides.

Interview: **Mark Blake**

It was one of the greatest, silliest rock images of the early 2000s, and perfectly summed up The Darkness: their showboating lead singer Justin Hawkins, wearing a shiny catsuit, riding over the audience on the back of a white tiger stage prop, like a cross between Dave Lee Roth and Mowgli from *The Jungle Book*.

The Darkness were a loud, unashamed, spandex-clad rock band in the era of Coldplay and The White Stripes. Their 2003 debut album, *Permission To Land*, reached No.1 in the UK; its flagship single *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* went to No.2, and they even challenged Slade and Wizzard with their seasonal hit *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End)*.

The brainchild of brothers Justin and guitarist Dan Hawkins, it was elder sibling Justin's falsetto and five-octave range, his absurd humour and extravagant fashion sense that grabbed the headlines. Many seasoned rock fans got it, while others muttered disparagingly and went back to their old Gillan LPs. But The Darkness also crossed over to a pop audience who didn't give two hoots for Deep Purple, never mind Gillan.

The Darkness underwent a messy separation in 2006, then reunited in 2011. Since then, Justin Hawkins has straddled the worlds of rock (with five more Top 20 Darkness albums), Saturday-night TV (via his stint on reality music show *The Masked Singer*) and YouTube, where

his Justin Hawkins Rides Again channel has close to half a million subscribers.

In October, The Darkness celebrate *Permission To Land*'s 20th anniversary with a bumper reissue (reviewed this issue) and a birthday tour. Today, Justin Hawkins is talking to *Classic Rock* from his adopted home of Thurgau, in eastern Switzerland. He's not the only émigré British rock star in town, though.

"I'm about an hour away from where Phil Collins lives," he divulges. "That's why I'm here. It gets awkward since he's taken out that injunction..."

|||||

"I tend to go through an identity crisis every seven to ten years."

It's twenty years since the band's debut album *Permission To Land*. How has it been going back to it again?

We are writing a new Darkness album, so now is a good time to listen to it. I like it, but I don't feel

like the same person that recorded it. But I tend to go through an identity crisis every seven to ten years. So that's like two whole existences in my life.

Everything in The Darkness's world seems accelerated, though. You split up after the second album then reunited five years later.

I think that's because we weren't equipped for all this. We came from normal working-class families that weren't musical at all. But we were also brought up to never say no to any opportunity. It seems accelerated, but that's >





First light of The Darkness: (l-r) Justin Hawkins, Ed Graham, Dan Hawkins, Frankie Poullain circa 2003.

SCARLETT PAGE/PIRESS

generally what happens when you get offered opportunities and just say yes to everything.

How would people have described you as a teenager at school?

Sportsy. Clownish. Not part of the cool clique. Definitely different from the other kids. Nerdy, sensitive...

What was the first record you bought?

The first single was Joe Dolce's *Shaddup Your Face*, followed by Shakin' Stevens's *This Ole House*. My dad had a lot of great records, though – Dire Straits, Queen, Bryan Adams. The first album I bought with my own money was Run DMC's *Raising Hell*, which got me into Aerosmith and rock. There's some nasty blues-rock playing on *Raising Hell* which is quite easy to pull off.

It makes a change from trying to copy Jimmy Page, Ritchie Blackmore, Eddie Van Halen etc.

I loved all that. But, growing up, musicians like that made it daunting to take up the guitar. There was something nasty and easy to do about Run DMC.

You funded the early Darkness by writing and performing radio and TV advertising jingles for brands and products including IKEA,

HSBC and Mars bars. How much did that influence the band?

I wouldn't say I have an encyclopaedic knowledge, but I have listened to an awful lot of music, so I know how it's put together. I can recognise what influences some music, and go back to the original source. If an ad agency didn't have the money for an existing track, they called me up to do something that sounded like it without us getting sued.

Which artists did you have to copy?

I did one that was supposed to sound like Survivor, one like Marc Bolan, Neil Diamond, John Barrie... After a while the agency were aware I was doing rock music of my own. So I went from being the guy they used for anything without a budget to the guy that does rock when there isn't a budget.

You once said: "The whole reason we started The Darkness was out of defiance," and that you "didn't care about being cool." In 2003 the group crossed over to the mainstream, but also made a lot of classic rock fans terribly cross.

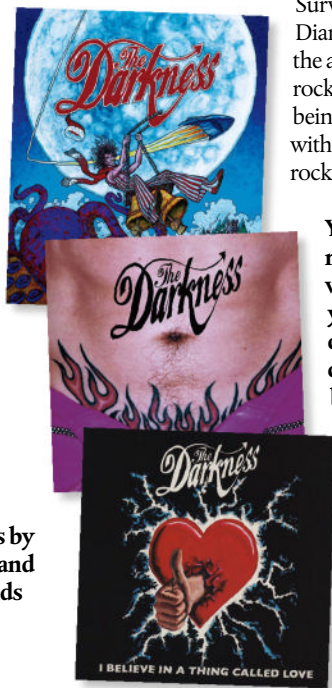
We did. I remember The Darkness supporting Whitesnake in Ipswich just as we were coming up [May 2003]. This was before people knew we had an album of good songs. There was a bit of: "Are these guys taking the piss out of us?" For a minute it felt like we weren't going to cross over, even to people who liked the same things we were influenced by. It was tough because we fell between two worlds. But I think we worked so hard that we dug ourselves out of it.

A lot of heavy rock is inherently funny/stupid, though, whether it's meant to be or not.

Exactly. But the comedy stuff we edge towards isn't like Spinal Tap or Steel Panther, it's more surreal than that. It's things like [70s actor and spoken-word artist] Peter Wyngarde or the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. I'm always trying to put dramatic monologues on our albums. With *Permission To Land*, people kept talking about how we sounded like AC/DC and Queen, but they didn't mention William Shatner.

Black Shuck, from Permission To Land, was about a ghost dog local to East Anglia. American bands sing about LA or New York, so you sang about The Darkness's home town, Lowestoft.

This is something my brother and I didn't always



"If an ad agency didn't have the money for an existing track, they called me up to do something that sounded like it."



I believe in a thing called showmanship.

agree on. Dan wanted us to be the biggest band in the world. He's very ambitious. But I just had this instinct that if you write about things you know about, it doesn't matter if they are very, very geographically specific. Problems in Lowestoft are the same as in any other town that size [laughs]. It would be ridiculous for us to do something urban. Not authentic at all. I mean, if I was doing a lyric about an illness, I'd be very specific about the symptoms.

What illness would the Darkness sing about, though? Something from the Middle Ages, like the Black Death?

Maybe Raynaud's Disease [laughs]. That's a horrible disease, isn't it? It makes it difficult to play guitar.

Does your brother have a problem with the more tongue-in-cheek aspects of The Darkness, then?

I don't think so. I think we both have one foot on each side of the line for it to work. The line is there to be danced upon. I reject anything too serious and he rejects anything too silly.

How many good Queen stories did you get out of Roy Thomas Baker when he produced the second Darkness album, 2005's *One Way Ticket To Hell... And Back*?

I have heard a million Freddie stories, which I can't possibly tell you, though. We spent twenty-four hours a day in Roy's company and he was hilarious, wonderful. If we had an idea, Roy would take it as far as it could go. I played some stupid

pan pipes thing on a synthesiser with a pan pipe setting. So Roy found the best pan pipe player in Peru. Some of my notes didn't exist in pan pipe world, so they built a special pan pipe so he could play that.

Why did you leave the group after that second album?

I couldn't be around The Darkness because of all the drinking and everything. It wouldn't have

another day off for a month. "But fuck it, it's TV, let's do it." That's what it was like then. We didn't take a moment.

You recently said that you used to drink like normal people, "but like two or three normal people" at the same time. You've been clean and sober for seventeen years now.

Yes, seventeen years. If I hadn't gotten sober we wouldn't have been having this conversation.

"The comedy stuff we edge towards isn't like Spinal Tap or Steel Panther, it's more surreal than that."

been good for my recovery. I didn't want to stop making music but I wanted to stop killing myself.

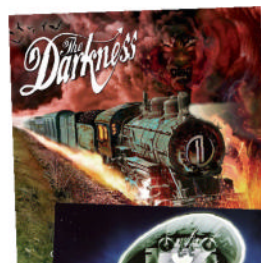
Is that why you took a break and formed a new group, Hot Leg?

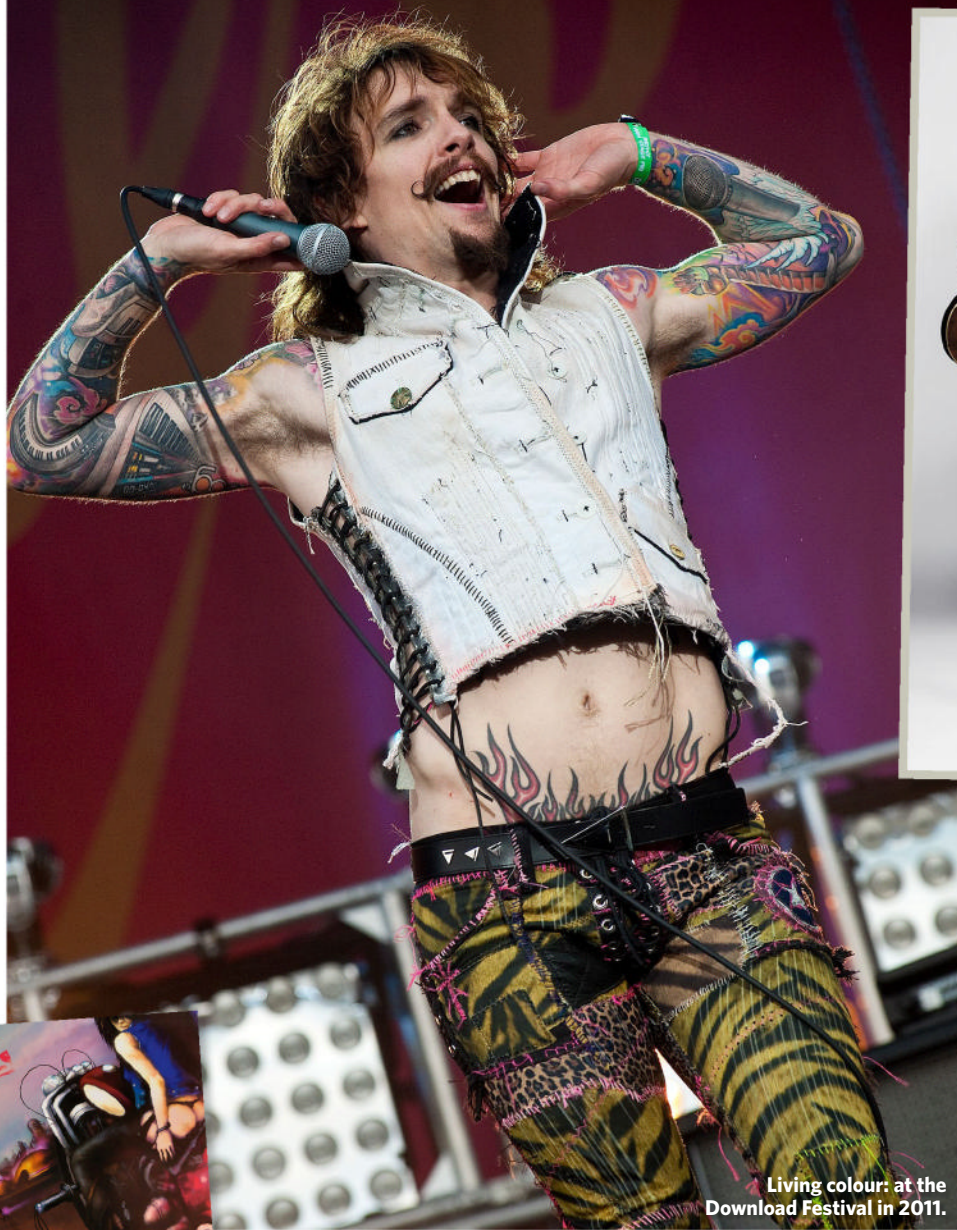
Yes. I needed to do something where I was in charge and the people around me in Hot Leg weren't all drinking. I think all of us in The Darkness could have done with some time off. It would have been good for our relationships and, yes, our mental health. But then someone says: "Do you want to do this TV show?" And you've already done ten on the run and you won't have

Meanwhile, Justin was great at playing Screaming Lord Sutch in the film *Telstar: The Joe Meek Story* but less great when bidding to represent the UK in the 2007 Eurovision Song

Contest. Justin and soul singer Beverlie Brown's duet *They Don't Make 'Em Like They Used To Do* wasn't chosen. "I'll be going for Eurovision every year," he said at the time. "I don't care what it takes."

Instead, he and Dan reunited The Darkness and made 2012's comeback album *Hot Cakes*. The group have weathered several line-up changes since, including the return of original bassist Frankie Poullain (who'd quit after *Permission To Land*), and the arrival of drummer Rufus Taylor, son of Queen drummer Roger. ➤





Living colour: at the Download Festival in 2011.

“All you can hear with that helmet on [on *The Masked Singer*] is the sound of your appearance fee hitting your bank account.”

Four more albums have followed, each one fusing Dan’s mighty riffs with Justin’s paint-peeling vocals, skewed humour (sample song titles: *Japanese Prisoner Of Love*, *Rock And Roll Deserves To Die*) and geographically-specific lyrics (see: *Welcome Tae Glasgow*, from 2021’s *Motorheart*). The Darkness still aren’t saying no to any opportunity.

The Darkness were always going to get back together, weren’t they?

Dan and I had actually been writing together for a couple of years before we went back to doing it properly. We wanted to do all the touring a year later than we did, but it was Def Leppard who insisted we do the Download festival with them [in 2011]. They made us their main support and brokered that whole thing. That brought the timeline forward. We thought the longer we stayed away, the better [laughs].

Was it easier going back to the group sober and after a break?

No, it wasn’t easier. The first album we did together [*Hot Cakes*] was conflict-shy and we

weren’t communicating effectively. We weren’t pissed off with each other, but we were being tentative around each other so as not to fuck it up.

Did the music suffer?

That attitude isn’t productive when writing songs. It *should* be a battle, everyone fighting for the things they believe in. It’s more fun, as long as you don’t forget that you all love each other. It’s easy to lose sight of that. If you really believe in something and they don’t, it’s tempting to say: “I am not working with you any more”.

In the original video for *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* you’re writhing around in your underpants. Do you ever get embarrassed?

Frankie [Poullain] thinks I am immune to it.



Hawkins’s other band Hot Leg in 2008: (l-r) Pete Rinaldi, Samuel Stokes, Hawkins (front) Darby Todd.



Is it arrogance?

I don’t know that it is. I was an early adopter of the idea that if things go badly wrong, it’s actually good. When I was eighteen – this would have been around 1993 – I was doing some live stuff opening for the better local bands, and it was just me, a drum machine and a guitar. I would go on and improvise – just start the machine and jam. I was just making shit up on the spot. The first time I did it, my friend also fired ping pong balls at me. That was our show. My point is, you can’t do that stuff if you feel embarrassed, or embarrassed by failure.

Did it go badly wrong?

If it went at all [laughs]. Everything goes wrong. I’m at the stage now where I will draw attention to the mistakes we make. Like, if my brother drops a note or his guitar fucks up, I will say, very loudly: “Dan Hawkins on electric guitar!” every time.

Many classic rock bands get trapped in an image. Their audience expects, say, Judas Priest to go on stage wearing leather, and not an old pair of jeans. Do you feel trapped by having to wear a catsuit?

No. But it’s funny when people who heard our first record and then stopped paying attention to our career come up to me now. They’ll say: “Oh, you should go back to wearing the catsuit.” I say: “I never stopped wearing the fucking catsuit.”

You just stopped paying attention. I’ve been wearing the catsuit for twenty-one years. How many more fucking years do I have to wear it?” Over the summer we did some festival shows with Guns N’ Roses, and I wore a business suit. I rocked up on stage in the suit I wore when I arrived at the festival.

Did you find that liberating?

Yes. I could put my hand in my trouser pocket and be nonchalant. I was topless, though. But I am definitely up for trying new stuff. Going forward, I will

probably mix it up between experimenting and wearing traditional Justin Hawkins stage wear.

If someone hadn't listened to The Darkness since *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* and *Permission To Land*, where should they start? *Easter Is Cancelled* [released in 2019]. That's definitely the one. It's the nearest thing to a concept album we ever made, and I'm still proud of the whole foretelling-of-covid thing.

Wasn't that a fluke?

Yes. There was a lyric in there: 'Spreading disease so they can sell the cure.' I also think the headline 'Easter Is Cancelled' was used at some point during lockdown. Some of our fans were like: "Yay! Told you! The Darkness are brilliant!" They saw it as vindication for their faith in us.

You've since become a very accessible kind of rock star. You have a dedicated Patreon following, who pay for subscriber-only content, and a YouTube channel, Justin Hawkins Rides Again.

I have become very accessible. Patreon was a brilliant thing for me to do when touring stopped during covid and I had all these expensive things to think about. I was doing music and keep-fit videos, and being prolific. But we helped each other out in a difficult, dark time. It's like a friendship. I did a New Year's Eve event online where I was DJ-ing and playing acoustic songs, and it was fucking great. My family and friends came down and nobody bothered them. The Patreon group feels like a community that doesn't need me in it now.

You're up to 470,000 subscribers on Justin Hawkins Rides Again.

I think it's plateaued, but they are very engaged. I pivoted into it with the Patreon thing. My producer [Jenny May Finn] said we should do a YouTube channel. She thought I had a talent for it. So I half-heartedly went into it. Then it started to gain some traction.

Your followers also ask you to critique other artists' performances, including Axl Rose and Dave Lee Roth. In 2006, Jon Bon Jovi said: "I hate The Darkness, fucking hate them."

You commented recently on his vocal problems. Do you ever censor yourself?

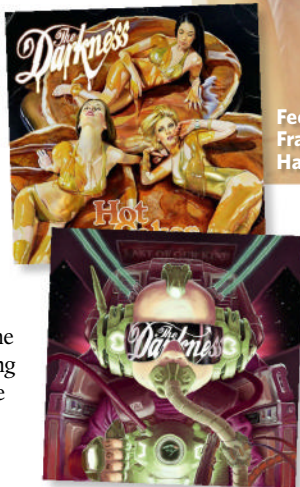
No, and I don't listen to any of the stuff before I react either. That would be cheating. I never disrespect anybody, though. Jon Bon Jovi's voice, for example, isn't operational at the moment.

You're having the conversation many Classic Rock readers are having among themselves.

Yes. I am sympathising too. Whether you are a fan or not doesn't matter. Jon Bon Jovi has a distinctive way of delivering songs, and he has lost it, whether temporarily or permanently. I was offering solutions and explanations.



Feeling blue: (l-r) Rufus Taylor, Frankie Poullain, Justin Hawkins, Dan Hawkins.



"[I left The Darkness] because of all the drinking. I didn't want to stop making music, but I wanted to stop killing myself."

Have any of your comments on the channel ever backfired? I recently expressed a preference for [Dire Straits'] Mark Knopfler's guitar

playing, because it's expressive and has vibrato and some things [Red Hot Chili Peppers'] John Frusciante doesn't. All I said was that I like Mark Knopfler using his guitar like a voice. It's a more old-fashioned way of playing, but for me it's more emotional. Then all these people piled in saying I was disrespecting John Frusciante. Oh, fuck off. Just fuck off! But I am not going to sit there and go: "Oh, I am sorry for having an opinion." Listen to what I actually said. I didn't disrespect anybody.

Do you ever worry about your voice becoming non-operational?

I don't worry about that at all. Twenty years on and I am still doing the songs in the original key. But I also don't feel like I sing the same way now. I think I sing better. Honestly, I don't care if I lose my voice. It's just life, isn't it? What I do is physical as well, playing a heavy guitar, running around, doing headstands. That can only last so long. I am forty-eight now.

Would you drop songs down a semitone or do whatever other rock singers do as they get older?

I've performed *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* with other bands, and they've already dropped down a half-step [semitone], maybe because it makes the guitar sound better, and it's easier for their singer. I find it harder to sing like that.

In 2020 you appeared on ITV's *The Masked Singer* wearing a chameleon costume. One of the show's judges, Davina McCall, heard your performance of Radiohead's *Creep* and said: "This is good. Not a singer, but good."

Yes! [laughs]. But, really, all you can hear with that helmet on is the sound of your appearance fee hitting your bank account. That really was all I cared about.

Did you enjoy the show at all?

It was... *alright*. It's difficult to sing in a papier-mâché hat, and it's visually restrictive. You can only see out of a small aperture, a bit smaller than a letter box. It's also discombobulating. The people that ran the thing were really nice to me, but it's a lonely existence as you're not allowed to talk to anyone or have any entourage with you in case they get recognised. Really, it was a handy injection of serious money when I needed it.

Would you do *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!* or *Strictly Come Dancing*? You've got to be a contender for *Strictly*; you must be in better nick than the average retired footballer.

I don't know. If something comes along I will consider it on its artistic merit [makes the universal hand gesture]





In synch: Frankie Poullain, Hawkins and brother Dan with The Darkness in London's Hyde Park this summer.



The Darkness's success turned Hawkins's world upside down.



Hawkins with singer Désirée Mishoe and Darkness drummer Rufus Taylor.

"I don't feel like I sing the same way now. I think I sing better. Honestly, I don't care if I lose my voice. It's just life, isn't it?"

signal for rubbing bank notes together]. These things can be good for raising the band's profile and reminding people I didn't die. I nearly did, but I didn't... No, but a lot of people thought I was dead or heading that way. I don't need to do that at the moment, but if a TV opportunity came along it would have to be quite well paid.

Do you make good money from *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End?)*?

No, but our streaming royalties are alright now. I have been watching this with interest. Something has changed, and our catalogue is doing better than it was. As a songwriter, your wealth is your catalogue, and real wealth is what builds when you're not doing anything. Our revenue is up a lot. You notice it at Easter or around summertime, that's when the money comes in. But *Christmas Time* was only a hit in the UK. It wasn't even released in the States.

How serious were you about The Darkness breaking America twenty years ago?

We fell through the cracks [sighs]. In the UK we structured the campaign on the first record. *Get Your Hands Off My Woman* was the first single, because it was a good attention-grabbing swear song, then *Growing On Me*, which was good for the mainstream, and then *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*, which

is when Atlantic Records put some proper money into the video, and we made the next step up.

So what went wrong?

The American side of Atlantic had the opportunity to build it up in the same way, but they allowed the radio stations to pick the first single. Of course, they all went for *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*. The campaign was over before it began. There was nowhere for us to go.

So you didn't bother?

No, I couldn't be bothered by then [laughs]. I didn't want to go there on the second record, so we didn't. If the record company had a more patient approach to the States we could have done better. That was the first moment I thought: "Okay, yes, some of what you hear about the music trade is true." But I do enjoy going there now.

Do you think America gets the humour?

Yes, because we are laughing at musical snobbery. America doesn't suffer from that the way we do here. There's more openness in the American music world – more collaborations and crossovers. Bands are less bitchy too, because it's such a huge market it's impossible for one band to claim

it for themselves. When a band dominates in the UK, you get jealousy. For a minute it was us.

You also have a fast track to your fan base now through the internet. That wasn't available twenty years ago.

Yes, and it's a beautiful thing. My patrons are my focus group for *everything* now. If I was asked to do *Strictly* or another mainstream TV show, I would ask them: "Is this something which will make you cringe, or should I go for it?"

Finally, somebody once told us you make your own scent and you smell very nice.

What? Ha! Yes [looks a bit suspicious]. I have been known to dabble in that world. I don't know which scent the person who told you this was talking about, though. They must have got in close and had a good sniff.

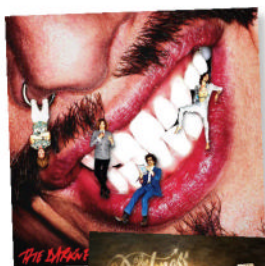
What do you smell like now, then?

Mmmm... [long pause] Something evoking old fur that's been in a cupboard for a long time, with patchouli and some sweet stuff on the top, like coconut or even sugar.

And on that note...

A weird ending to the interview. Thank you. 🙌

*The 20th-anniversary **Permission To Land... Again** box set (reviewed on p84) is out now via Warner Music. The Darkness tour the UK in December.*



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TALES OF THE UNEXPECTED

Musician, songwriter, producer, go-to remixer, **Steven Wilson** is viewed by many as a renaissance man of modern prog. He's also something of an enigma. Maybe his new album, which "encapsulates so much of my musical personality", will answer more questions than it poses.

Words: **Polly Glass**

When Steven Wilson was a teenager living in Hemel Hempstead, he read a short story by the American science-fiction writer Thomas M Disch. An outspoken satirist, atheist and gay man in the 60s (he ultimately committed suicide in 2008), Disch was a troubled individual. The story in question, *Descending*, is a punishing, bleak tale of an unrepentant layabout who takes the down escalator in a shopping mall and finds he can't get off it.

For Wilson – who also became fascinated by serial killers and the darker reaches of humanity – that image had a lasting impact. You could call it a precursor to the menacing, industrial shades of his catalogue. Chiefly, though, it planted in his head the idea of the never-ending staircase. From Porcupine Tree's first 'proper' album *Up The Downstair* to their 2005 song *Arriving Somewhere But Not Here*, it's become something of a recurring motif; a metaphor for an endless descent, like Thomas Disch's dystopian escalator. Or for life as a stairway to... somewhere.

"I think a lot of my songwriting over the years has been very loosely related to this idea of it being about the journey, not about the arrival, the process and not the destination," he says today, sitting outside his family home in North West London. "And I think that's something that the older I get, the more I realise that that's what life really is, isn't it?"

During lockdown he wrote a short story titled *The Harmony Codex*, employing the never-ending stairway image to dreamlike effect (it was published in his 2021 book *Limited Edition Of One*) while still operating in the present day. From the screen-crazed youth of Porcupine Tree's *Fear Of A Blank Planet*, to urban isolation in his own *Hand. Cannot. Erase*, Wilson has never struggled for inspiration from this world.

"Even if writers like Arthur C Clarke and Philip K Dick were writing about other planets, really they

were writing about themselves," he reasons. "They were writing about the human race. I think that's always been true of science fiction; it's a wonderful magnifying glass for human behaviour.

"Now, I approached it in a slightly less nihilistic way than Thomas Disch," he adds. "He wrote some of the most truly depressing science fiction I've ever read. But I never forgot this metaphor of the never-arriving, always-descending shopping-mall escalator."

Now his seventh album, also called *The Harmony Codex*, takes all this into colossal sonic terrain. A labyrinthine Escher staircase of a record, it's an enveloping, 65-minute trip through Wilson's entire musical makeup – made under lockdown but looking far beyond that. It's the product of a weird time in history. A career spent immersed in myriad styles and sounds. A life that doesn't look the way he thought it would.

"Rock is the cult music of the twenty-first century, in the same way that jazz became a cult. Maybe that's not a bad thing."

"This is not what I expected," he muses, his wife and stepdaughters somewhere in the rooms behind him. "But it makes me very happy anyway."

Steven Wilson has long been a champion for the unexpected. A serious, slightly odd guy who's just as likely to enthuse about disco deep cuts and the industrial noise of Throbbing Gristle as about Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Gentle Giant and other prog legends (most of whom he's remixed in 5.1/Atmos at some point). Not to mention a cinephile who would love to score a film in the dreamlike, auteur vein of David Lynch or Stanley Kubrick.

By turns his solo albums have delved into skewed jazz (*Grace For Drowning*), classic progressive rock (*The Raven That Refused To Sing*), 80s art-pop (*To The Bone*) and more. He has even made records that no one knows are his –

esoteric works, released under pseudonyms, unhindered by the expectations that come with being a known artist.

Then, in March 2020, everything changed. Wilson's reflections on life, memory and the modern age collided during those deeply strange, locked-down weeks that became months. It led to an unusual mix of autobiography, observation and dreamlike narrative in his music. He wasn't even sure he'd release it, only that he wanted to make it.

"I think it made me a bit more insular, and a bit less aware of my audience," he says of that period. "It was a very surreal, one might say dreamlike, state of mind. Like: 'This can't be happening in reality can it?' Like a lot of people, I kind of enjoyed the isolation to begin with. Then it became less comfortable, and it became debilitating. So it was written in lots of different states of mind."

While his previous solo records tended to pick a lane and stick to it, *The Harmony Codex* does the opposite. There are four-minute pop songs and 10-minute tracks. Electronics, guitar solos and orchestral textures. Gauzy, meditative Americana (*What Life Brings*) and Roger Waters-esque epics

(*Impossible Tighrope*). Cavernous, atmospheric drum machines (*Indination*), other-worldly synths and spoken-word passages – the latter provided by Wilson's wife, Rotem Wilson. Gnarly tales about the 21st century (*Actual Brutal Facts*, *Beautiful Scarecrow*) sit alongside gentle, melodious meditations on mortality like *Time Is Running Out*. The album is swooping, cinematic and all over the place – in a good way.

"There might have been, on previous records, a moment where I would have said: 'No, you can't possibly have *Indination* on the same record as *Impossible Tighrope*,'" Wilson explains. "This time I had no agenda. I just wanted to create a fascinating, engaging musical journey, which in a way would reflect all of my musical guises, and hopefully a few new ones too."

With everyone working on the record doing so remotely, contributors were cherry-picked to ➤





On the up ramp: "I still think I'm getting better," says Steven Wilson.

form "bespoke bands" for each track. "It enabled me to think about each song as having its own little musical universe," he says. "So every track I did, I was like: 'Okay, who would I like to play on this?' I was sending out files, I was giving a little guidance here and there, but generally I was waiting for people to surprise me."

Some contributors are less surprising. Prog-friendly faces like Guy Pratt and Lee Harris (both of Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets by day) appear, as do Wilson 'regulars' such as keyboard player Adam Holzman, sax player Theo Travis (Soft Machine), and bassist Nick Beggs. Israeli pop star Ninet Tayeb, another returning collaborator, sings on some tracks and wrote lyrics for the powerful, Pink Floyd-meets-Bond soundtrack ballad *Rock Bottom*, inspired by her experience of bi-polar disorder.

Others are less obvious. Jack Dangers (of 90s electronic pioneers Meat Beat Manifesto) contributes drum machine parts. For *Impossible Tightrope* Wilson wanted "a jazz drummer that had grown up listening to Aphex Twin and Squarepusher" (he found one: American Nate Wood). A separate disc features remixes and "reimaginings" by Manic Street Preachers, Tears For Fears' Roland Orzabal, and Mikael Åkerfeldt, to name three, essentially offering an alternative version of the same album. All of it stitched together by Wilson at home.

"There was a sense of going to the studio and going: 'Fuck it, I'm just gonna make a record exactly like I want to make it now, that I would want to hear at this moment in my life, almost as an antidote for everything else that's going on in the world right now.'"

The Harmony Codex won't sit well with everyone, and Wilson is okay with that. He's used to pissing

off listeners in the name of moving forward. He felt pushed to defend 2021's *The Future Bites* against aggrieved fans clamouring for more guitars. He often says he enjoys upsetting people, citing shapeshifters such as Prince and David Bowie as role models of sorts. Still, he's human. Of course it affects his subsequent movements, consciously or otherwise.

"There's always a reaction to the previous record, with everything I do," he concedes. "So *The Future Bites* had been this very tightly controlled, very concise, only forty minutes, electronic pop record – or at least by my standards it was an electronic pop record. So maybe this time around, subconsciously I'm just thinking: 'Okay, let's make

"I had no agenda. I just wanted to create a fascinating, engaging musical journey."

a big, self-indulgent, unashamedly reaching, pretentious, cinematic journey of a record'. Let's give them a record that they can lose themselves in. I don't see a lot of people making records like that." [Laughs] "So in my view, *this* is the truly alternative music of 2023."

As ever, he hopes for a million-selling record, but also knows that it won't happen – that it flies in the face of the click-baity, bite-size 'content' that tends to do the biggest business. He knows this, he accepts it, but he'll try anyway.

"It doesn't happen with rock albums any more," he says. "Rock has become the cult music of the 21st century, in much the same way that jazz became a cult. Maybe that's not a bad thing. It

certainly liberates it, in some senses. It's a kind of very passionate minority. I don't mind being a part of that minority.

"It doesn't belong in 2023. And I sense that there's a lot of people out there that want records that don't necessarily belong in 2023." He nods. "That's my demographic, right there."

More than anything, *The Harmony Codex* does what Wilson has long suggested the best music does: it takes you on a journey. At its heart it reflects a curious artist who isn't where he expected to be. A suburban, computer software salesman raised in a shy, reserved household, who started a band, travelled the world, moved to Israel and back, went solo, fell between myriad cracks, and eventually (last year, with a reunited Porcupine Tree) filled arenas. One of music's biggest stars that most of the world has never heard of. An introverted 'auteur' who suddenly became a family man at 51.

"I probably imagined being a rock star, that I could somehow be Prince, notwithstanding I had none of that talent," he says, chuckling in bracingly self-mocking tones. "I never imagined myself being a stepfather, being part of a family unit with children. Even at the age of fifty-one when I got married, life was still throwing up unexpected things. But I completely embrace it."

Accordingly, he now spends a little less time in the studio and more time with his wife and two stepdaughters. He walks his two dogs in the woods near their house. He goes to work in his studio but doesn't keep ridiculous hours. The glut of remix releases under his name, he says, paint a misleading picture of his work habits.

"I'm not one of those people that will disappear into the studio for twenty-four hours straight with ten cups of coffee. I've always had this kind of 'go to the studio at twelve o'clock, finish at six o'clock'. It's just the way that works best for me. So I am slowing down a bit. It's taken three years for me to make this record, but I think it's one of the best things I've ever done. And there's nothing I would change about it. So it might be another three years till I make another record, or it might be another five years. Quality over quantity these days."

Not that he's slowing down *too* much. *The Harmony Codex* was recorded with spatial audio in mind, a field in which Wilson has long been rather a lone frontrunner, and that the wider world is suddenly getting interested in ("Who would have thought?" he says, laughing. "At this age I'm finally an innovator!").

And underneath the workmanlike approach his motivation is still quietly, refreshingly ambitious. There's a glint of the Bowies, Princes and Reznors that he admires. The maverick spirit of those weird, pseudonymous records of his, still out there in the world, somewhere.

"I still love it, and I still think I'm getting better," he says. "I know there are fans who will disagree, but from a very personal perspective I don't think I've made a better record than *The Harmony Codex*, or a record that encapsulates so much of my musical personality. And I still feel like I'm learning. I'm learning from making my own records, I'm learning from the records I remix, I'm learning from life." 🎧

The Harmony Codex is out now via Virgin.

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FOLLOW THE FELLOW WHO FOLLOWS A DREAM

In December 1973, *Elton John* finished a triumphant 13-date UK tour. It capped off an extraordinary year in which his album *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* reinforced in some style his status as a global superstar.

Words: **Mick Wall**

'There were several roads nearby, but it did not take Dorothy long to find the one paved with yellow bricks. Within a short time, she was walking briskly toward the Emerald City; her silver shoes tinkling merrily on the hard, yellow roadbed.'

The Wonderful Wizard Of Oz, 1900

July 1973. It can now be confirmed. Elton John's rocket ship has officially left Earth's atmosphere. His latest hit-laden album, *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only the Piano Player*, released at the start of the year, is his second in a row to top the charts in both Britain and America. Now his uncharacteristically barnstorming new single *Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting* is in the UK Top 10, and Elton is on his way to becoming an authentic rock god – bigger than The Beatles; stranger than the Stones; more glitter than Gary. The transformation begun when *Crocodyl Rock*, already a hit here, gave him his first US No.1 single in February. In Britain, just 12 months before, Elton was still a one-hit wonder known for *Your Song*. In America his fame was more widespread but still anchored in bearded singer-songwriter mode, respectfully bespectacled crooner of *Your Song* and its more knowing companion *Tiny Dancer*.

Saturday Night's Alright is his fifth major hit since *Rocket Man* unlocked the doors to the world's singles charts the previous summer. Resulting TV appearances sporting ever more bizarre eyewear and a no-limits attitude to on-stage costumery unseen since the diamond daze of *Liberace* have transformed public perception of the singer from earnest musical artisan to glammed-up, arena-headlining rock star.

Elton John is 26 and will never be so high again. High in the charts, high on the recent launch of his own record label, Rocket Records, high on his new name, now legally changed to Elton Hercules John. (Hercules because it was the name of the horse in the TV sitcom *Steptoe And Son* and Elton was a fan, true story.) Soon to be even higher on a new grand passion: cocaine.

Inside, though, he is still chubby four-eyed Reggie Dwight, the insecure closeted teen from a broken home. As he confessed in his 2019 memoir, *Me*, despite becoming the biggest-selling star in the world in the early 70s, he was always filled with "self-loathing".

"There was no solitude, no reflection," he confessed. "I was still the little boy from Pinner Hill Road underneath it all." Nobody would have guessed it from seeing him on *Top Of The Pops*, dressed in spangly bover boots and braces, pounding on the piano on *Saturday Night's Alright* like Jerry Lee Lewis on black-and-white TV in 1957.

That single is up to No.7, and even butch Slade and Mott The Hoople fans are stomping their platforms and shaking out their dandruff to it. No one believes for a second that Elton is really a bottle-wielding brawler with 'a bellyful of beer' any more than they believe his mate Marc Bolan is really a magic elf. But these are still the smoke-filled days when you must fight for your right to be on the UK's biggest TV music show. You might be David Bowie with *Life On Mars*, but you are more likely to be Alvin Stardust with *My Coo Ca Choo*. Elton John wishes to appeal to both sets of fans.

Now his wish is coming true. His real journey has finally begun. He's travelling the yellow brick road, destination: Emerald City, where everything is the colour of bejewelled greenbacks. >

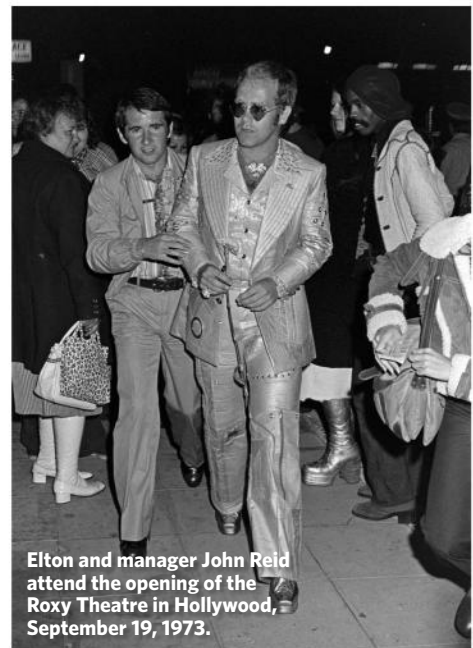
"It felt like there was an unstoppable momentum behind me."

Elton John





Elton and his lyricist Bernie Taupin receive gold discs in 1973 for four of their co-written albums.



Elton and manager John Reid attend the opening of the Roxy Theatre in Hollywood, September 19, 1973.

Elton John may have reinvented himself as a singles star, but everyone knew it was his albums where the real treasure was to be found. He'd never made a bad one, had the gold records in America to show for it. Now the unexpected leap from the gloomy prog-rock of *Madman Across the Water* in 1971 to the swaggering confidence of the glorious *Honky Château* in '72 had led to a brace of multimillion-selling albums and no less than five multimillion-selling singles in the space of barely a year.

With that journey leaving him so completely at ease in his new, more elevated role as rock star with a capital 'R', Elton now felt he could turn his hand to anything his writing partner Bernie Taupin's lyrics suggested.

His backing group – 22-year-old guitarist Davey Johnstone, 27-year-old bassist Dee Murray and 24-year-old drummer Nigel Olsson, soon to be formally named the Elton John Band – had a sound as instantly identifiable as T.Rex or Rod Stewart. His US label, MCA, thought he'd shit the bed when *Saturday Night's Alright* made only No.12 there. But the message got through. This was no longer weepy James Taylor-style soul-searching, this was rock'n'roll genocide à la The Who and Zeppelin.

Outwardly, Elton was on a roll. Inwardly he feared it might all just blow away any second. The only safeguard was to keep going and see how far his new ruby slippers could take him. To that end he had released five albums in the past three years. He had also already recorded the 17 songs that would comprise his seventh, from which *Saturday Night's Alright* was the first track to be launched like a fireball.

However, when he announced that his next album would be a double, enigmatically titled *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, there was a sharp intake of breath. You had to admire the audacity, but surely a sturdy third to complete a *Honky*

Château-Don't Shoot Me triptych was the right move. MCA certainly thought so. But Elton knew better. The Beatles, he pointed out, "did the White Album and now we'll have our double too".

A double album in 1973 was more than an artistic statement, it was a status symbol, a collection demanding everybody's attention. Only rock giants made double albums. Dylan had framed the conversation in 1966 with *Blonde On Blonde*, as Hendrix would do in '68 with *Electric Ladyland*. The Stones followed suit in '72 with *Exile*

Kingston, Jamaica in January 1973 to begin working on *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, they looked on it as an adventure. It wasn't until they arrived that the scale of that ultimately doomed enterprise sunk in.

Byron Lee's Dynamic Sounds Studio was a 180-degree turn from the elegant confines of the *Château d'Hérouville* where he'd made both *Honky Château* and *Don't Shoot Me*. The 18th-century *Château* was situated in lush French countryside 40 miles north of Paris. Converted

into a state-of-the-art 16-track residential recording facility in 1969 by the French experimental composer Michel Magne, it boasted 30 rooms, outbuildings, a swimming pool and a tennis court. Gourmet meals would be prepared every night by the resident chef, and fine wines procured from local vineyards.

Dynamic Sounds, once the home of Bob Marley's Wailers, Toots And The Maytals and other herbaceous reggae pioneers, was a hot, dusty compound full of out-of-date gear and unsettling vibes. Producer Gus Dudgeon had ordered a raft of new equipment to be ready for when they arrived, but it never showed up. Elton's grand piano didn't arrive either, and the cobwebby old studio piano was a joke. The disconcertingly downcast mood was not helped by the facility having 24-hour armed guards patrolling the barbed wire perimeter.

Elton and entourage had arrived the morning after George Foreman knocked out Joe Frazier at Kingston's National Stadium in two brutal rounds for the boxing heavyweight championship of the world. Violence hung heavy over the city for days afterwards. With every hotel overflowing, Elton found himself billeted at the Pink Flamingo Hotel, in the middle of teeming Kingston, while everybody else was taken to a luxurious resort location across the island in Ocho Rios.

"I was a horny twenty-three-year-old... I was basically writing about my fantasies at the time."

Bernie Taupin

On Main St. All stone-cold classics. Conferring the kind of cachet no amount of money can buy.

Now Elton wanted his music to be exalted in the same way. Only one caveat: if you were going to release a double album in 1973, it had better be better than good. It had better be *fucking* good.

Yet Elton denied he was under pressure. "It felt like there was an unstoppable momentum behind me," he said.

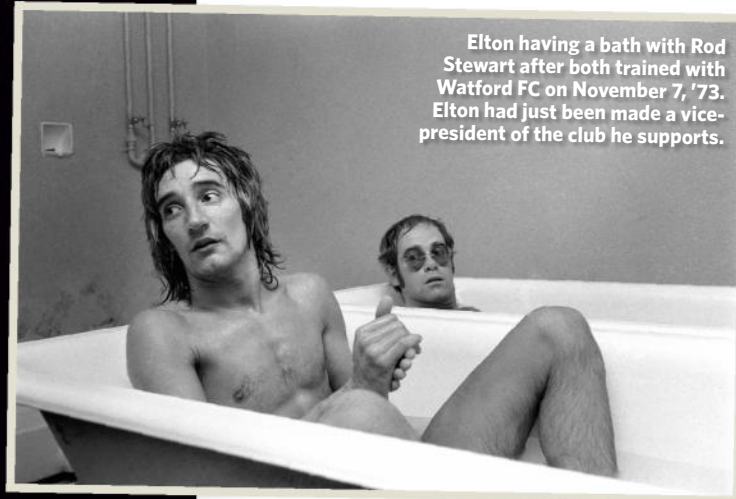
When Elton and his travelling band arrived in



Triple threat: Elton, Marc Bolan and Ringo Starr.



Plenty to shout about: Elton at one of the three sold-out shows at London's Hammersmith Odeon in December '73.



Elton having a bath with Rod Stewart after both trained with Watford FC on November 7, '73. Elton had just been made a vice-president of the club he supports.

With a 35-date summer US tour booked to begin in August, first single *Saturday Night's Alright* was released in July, the perfect crowd teaser. The clincher came in September with the second single, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. The cathedral-like title track of the forthcoming album was Elton John and Bernie Taupin at their bittersweetest, their most sepulchral yet somehow uplifting. Their giddy peak. Bernie using his countryside upbringing to characterise London life as a place 'where the dogs of society howl', all the while dreaming of 'going back to my plough'.

Half a century later it would be the last song Elton chose to sing every night on his Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour, elegiac and pure. Bernie's undisguised autobiography having evolved into Elton's musical epitaph, the yellow brick road the symbol of his journey from smalltown Pinner to big-time pop stardom.

The rest of the album was a jamboree of familiar Taupin tropes – mythmaking American yarns (*Roy Rodgers*; *The Ballad Of Danny Bailey* (1909-1934)); his parochial childhood, but with a new twist (*Saturday Night's Alright* was less about horny-backed toads and more about the dodgy Lincolnshire dancehalls of his teens); the pitfalls of Hollyweird fame (*Candle In The Wind*: the working title of the album *Silent Movies, Talking Pictures*); and the sometimes coarse nature of love (the achingly poignant *I've Seen That Movie Too*).

There was also some of the most juvenile material Bernie had ever asked Elton to put music and voice to: the grungy *Dirty Little Girl*, about, well, an ardent but unhygienic fan; *Social Disease*, the everyday tale of a bibulous tenant humping his landlady; *Sweet Painted Lady*, about a sailor's favourite port-in-a-storm prostitute; *All The Girls Love Alice*, about a wistful teenage lesbian dreaming of 'two dykes in a go-go'.

"It is a pretty blue record," Bernie reflected years later. "I was a young kid, a horny twenty-three-year-old, among a lot of other horny

twenty-somethings... I was basically writing about my fantasies at the time."

There was also the 'problematic' to modern tastes *Jamaica Jerk-Off*, Elton chirruping in a faux 'islands' accent over a white-bread reggae lilt. But then Paul Simon, who recorded his 1972 hit *Mother And Child Reunion* at Dynamic the year before, had been similarly 'inspired'. As was ➤



Elton was too terrified to step outside the hotel. When news arrived that *Don't Shoot Me* had gone to No.1 in America, a celebration dinner was arranged at the Pink Flamingo. But Elton refused to join, and sulked in his room.

When he arrived for the first day's recording at Dynamic to find Gus and the band still trying to figure out how to make things work, it was the last straw. The vibes, man, they did not augur. "It's hard to see how they could have been," said Bernie Taupin, "with guards holding machine-guns outside the door."

Elton returned in a huff to the Pink Flamingo and didn't come out again for three days. Unable to sit still without worrying, he worked through a stack of new lyrics from Bernie. Dozens of sheets, neatly typed, that he sat alone in his room and wrote music for on a portable electric piano. By the morning of the fourth day he had 21 new songs, with titles including *Bennie And The Jets*, *Candle In The Wind*, *Saturday Night's Alright*

For Fighting and *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. They just needed to be recorded. Once it became clear that wouldn't be happening at Dynamic, they fled to New York, chased to the airport by various shady Jamaican 'business figures', many of whom carried guns.

Better news awaited. The Château was available, opened again after a temporary closure.

"We weren't angels, but we didn't get dragged into the spotlight because Elton took the heat."

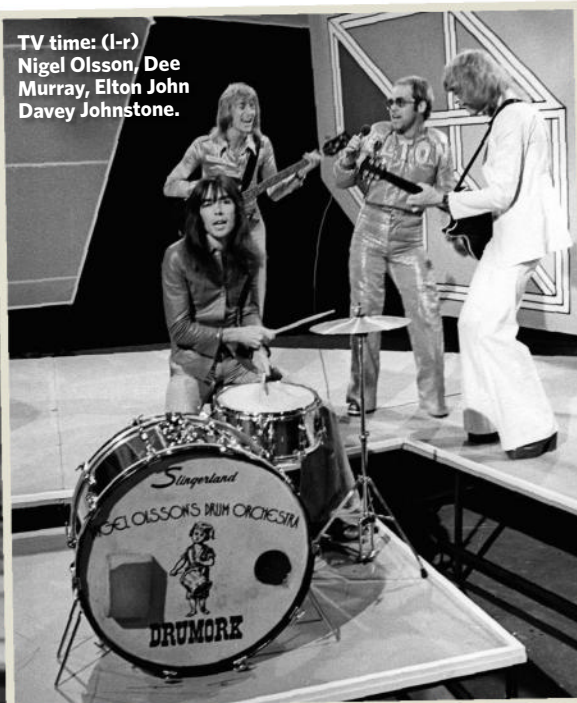
Guitarist Davey Johnstone

Recording began the moment they arrived back in France. Two weeks later they were done.

"It was insane," guitarist Davey Johnstone recalled when we spoke. "We were this factory, songwriting and recording together. As soon as we recorded it and released it, we'd take it straight out on tour. In the States especially it was just this giant unstoppable juggernaut."



Calm before the storm: Elton at home in England in March 1973.



TV time: (l-r) Nigel Olsson, Dee Murray, Elton John, Davey Johnstone.



Elton performing at the launch party for his label Rocket Records at Moreton-in-Marsh village hall in Gloucestershire, April 26, 1973.

Mick Jagger when the Stones churned out their own 'reggae-influenced' track *Luxury*, also recorded at Dynamic.

On a double album comprised of 17 tracks, however, these were flimsy side salads adjacent on the plate to the juicy steaks of reputation-crowning moments like the 11-minute opus *Funeral for A Friend/Love Lies Bleeding*, a synth-laden prog overture that slowly builds into a bonfire of blazing cut-glass guitars, strategically detonating drums and a rhythmic hook so heavy it draws blood.

Next up, *Candle in The Wind*, Bernie's eulogy to Marilyn Monroe and one of Elton's finest ever ballads, Johnstone's guitar motif twinkling like the neon ooze of Sunset Strip at night. Another hit single in the UK in February '74, at first it wasn't released in America, where MCA surprisingly chose the jokey *Bennie And The Jets* instead.

Elton was not happy. "I said 'No, I want *Candle In The Wind*'. Guess who was wrong?"

For Elton, *Candle In The Wind* was class; *Bennie And The Jets* was throwaway. But when two R&B radio stations in Detroit started playing it and saw their listenership skyrocket, MCA made it Elton's

next single. The result, in April 1974, was his second American No.1 single, selling more than two million copies.

On *Bennie*, the deliberate-mistake piano intro had prompted Dudgeon to, as he put it, "fake-live this". Mixing in audience sounds from Elton's show at London's Royal Festival Hall a year before, along with audience crackle from Jimi Hendrix's performance at the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, and some ambient mayhem from an Elton show in Vancouver, it would become the second most famous song on *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* (see boxout on opposite page).

Other album highlights: *Grey Seal*, originally a fey B-side to Elton's 1970 flop single *Rock And Roll Madonna*, now reborn as a Bowie-meets-Beatles showstopper; the harum-scarum *Your Sister Can't Twist (But She Can Rock'n'Roll)*; saving the best for last, almost, with the gorgeously swooning closer *Harmony*.

Any of these could have been hit singles, and if this had been the CD-driven 80s they would have been. But these were still the two-vinyl-LPs-a-year 70s, and Elton had already recorded his next album, *Caribou*, due out just nine months

after *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. There simply wasn't time for more singles.

Released in October 1973, *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* again topped both the UK and US charts (in the latter for eight consecutive weeks). As befitting its double-album eminence, it came in a lavish gatefold sleeve designed by illustrator and children's novelist Ian Beck: the cartoon image of a stack-heeled Elton stepping from a down-at-heel city onto a yellow brick road winding towards a sun that was either rising or setting depending on your mood.

The *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* US tour was conducted from the same private Boeing 720B that Led Zeppelin had toured in that summer, the now infamous *Starship*. It had the words 'ELTON JOHN BAND TOUR' now emblazoned down one side of its red, white and blue fuselage, and came fitted with luxury leather lounge seats, proper



Signing copies of his album *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player*, January 1973.

“There was no solitude, no reflection. I was still the little boy from Pinner Hill Road underneath.”

Elton John

dinner tables, a pseudo-electric coal fire, a fully stocked bar and TV lounge and – très chic, dear – a new-fangled video player. On board was also an electric Thomas organ, which Elton studiously ignored, and, in a rear cabin, a king-sized double bed covered in shaggy white fur which nobody slept in but many guests enjoyed. Unless Elton was having one of his tantrums. Then he would disappear in there for however long it took for him to calm down again.

In a group photograph taken standing in front of his new floating palace, a wonderfully camp Elton is seen in a white-and-turquoise jumpsuit, a wide-brimmed Panama hat cheerfully atop his head, wielding a soul-brother ebony cane. Surrounded by a vast entourage of tour technicians, record label bigwigs, assistants, gofers, the four-man Muscle Shoals horn section, manager and lover John Reid, plus the band and singer Kiki Dee, recently signed to Elton's label Rocket, who Davey was “having a scene with”.

Exactly three years on from his breakthrough shows at the tiny Troubadour club in LA, Elton now headlined the Hollywood Bowl and the Long Beach Arena on consecutive nights. Two weeks after that he headlined New York's Madison Square Garden for the first time. If *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*, in all its versions – single-album-allegory-hymn – is about transcending humdrum reality, then the American tour, which ran until October, found Elton's life transformed entirely into fantasy.

It was the same for Bernie, who toured with Elton. He didn't need to, he wanted to. Bernie had been deeply in love with America since he was a child gaping at *The Lone Ranger* on TV. Most of his songs were about, or set in, or have characters from, or cultural references, dreamscapes and an almost cinematic sense of the real – in America. That America now loved him too was so far over the rainbow for Bernie that he would have trouble coming back.

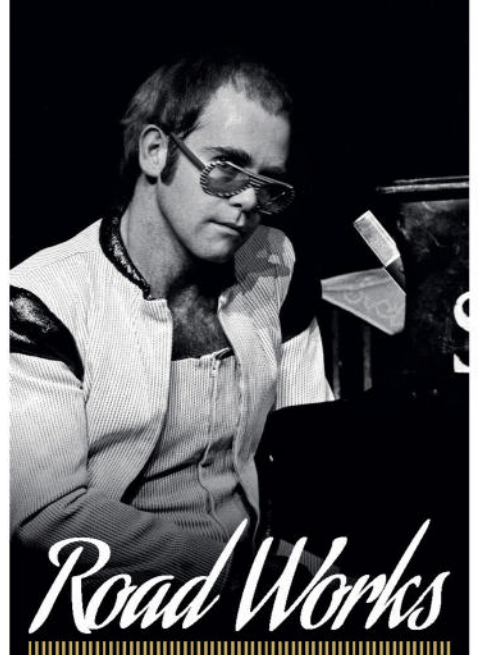
It was the same for the band and everyone else rocking in the clouds on the Starship. But while everyone else had a way to turn the volume down a notch if they wanted to – the band idled in peace; Bernie walked unmolested – Elton couldn't escape any of it for a second. He sang, he wrote, he performed, he did all the press, all the TV and radio, all the business meetings. His was the face everyone knew. Now it had become a human shield for everybody's bad behaviour but his own.

“We weren't angels, but we didn't get dragged into the spotlight because Elton took the heat for all that,” Davey Johnstone told me frankly. “We did a lot of music together and had a lot of fun together too. A lot of fun.”

He chuckled. “I've got to tell you. I can't say that it was terrible. Waking up with a hangover after being up for two days was a nightmare. But we were young enough to be able to wake up and go: ‘I'm going to sleep for the next day so I'm okay for what's coming up.’ But those were crazy times. I wouldn't change it for the world.”

In December 1973, Elton finished a 13-date UK tour on a triumphant note with three sold-out shows at London's Hammersmith Odeon. It coincided nicely with his surprise novelty single *Step Into Christmas* sharing the Top 10 that week with other soon-to-be-perennial cool-Yule classics like Slade's *Merry Xmas Everybody* and Wizzard's *I Wish It Could Be Christmas Every Day*.

For Elton John, for now, it felt like it was. ❶



Road Works

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road is the second-biggest-selling album released in 1973, now with more than 32 million sales worldwide. (The biggest-selling is Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* with over 50 million.)

It also includes *Candle In The Wind*, the song that would go on to become the biggest-selling single of all-time. It was a No.11 hit in the UK in 1973. A 1987 live version recorded in Australia went platinum in America and stayed in the US chart for nearly two years and received a Grammy nomination for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance. It reached No.5 in the UK.

Re-recorded in 1997 to mark the death of Princess Diana, with Bernie Taupin supplying new lyrics, famously changing opening line ‘Goodbye, Norma Jean’ to ‘Goodbye, England's rose’, along with four new stanzas, it was retitled *Candle In The*

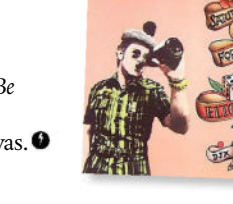
Wind 1997. Elton sung it at Diana's funeral to a TV audience of 2.5 billion people.

It instantly went to No.1, selling 658,000 copies on its first day of release in the UK. In America it sold over 3.5 million copies and was No.1 for 14 weeks. It sold more than 33 million copies worldwide, it became the biggest-selling single of all time.

The other momentous tracks on the album include *Bennie And The Jets*, which has subsequently featured in several Hollywood movies and TV shows, most memorably when Elton performed it live on *The Muppet Show* in 1978, accompanied by Kermit the Frog.

In 1994, when Axl Rose inducted Elton into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, he said of the track: “When I first heard *Bennie And The Jets*, I knew at that time that I had to be a performer.”

As for the transcendent title track, Elton also performed that with Kermit. Its true pride of place in the Elton canon was confirmed on the Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour, which began every night with *Bennie And The Jets* and ended with *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*.





EVER MEET LEMMY?

*They played hungover baseball with Jack White, went street racing with Chrissie Hynde, took a mysterious delivery from Steven Tyler, clashed with Paris Hilton, fought bouncers alongside Kings Of Leon... They are **The Cadillac Three** and these are their stories.*

Words: **Henry Yates**

They might have formed a decade ago within the city limits of Nashville, Tennessee, but The Cadillac Three often feel like the antidote to the glossiest excesses of modern country. Gritty, hooky and infused with the hickory smoke of southern rock, the power-trio line-up of Jaren Johnston (vocals/guitar), Kelby Ray (bass) and Neil Mason (drums) has triumphed on stages from Download to the Grand Ole Opry, with a sound perhaps best described by the title of their 2020 fourth record *Country Fuzz*.

While this year's *The Years Go Fast* brings together some of their heaviest material to date with the "pain, hurt and craziness" of the covid era, a chat with mouthpiece-in-chief Johnston is a delight, with the singer spinning war stories with an easy wit that makes it clear why the galacticos of rock have given him support slots, friendship and anecdote gold. It's strange to discover, then, that the one man who didn't fall for Johnston's charm offensive was the late Motörhead legend himself.

LEMMY

Johnston: We'd had a photo shoot all day in LA, and when we got done we got some friends together and went to the Rainbow Room. So we're drinkin' and everything, when suddenly I spot Lemmy in the corner, playing this little poker videogame or whatever. I didn't realise that he was always there, but I remember knowing exactly who it was; he had the black leather jacket on, y'know, with the badges and studs. So I kinda walked up to get my drink, and Lemmy looks over and says: "Well you're in a fucking band, ain't you?" I said: "Yes." But I could tell that he didn't give a shit who I was or what band. I could kinda tell he didn't want to be messed with that day.

STEVEN TYLER

Johnston: We met at the Country Music Hall Of Fame and hit it off immediately. So the next day, I go over to his house to write. There's all these tiny dogs running around, and the whole place smells like the strongest Colombian coffee you've ever smelled in your life, because at the time Steven was very sober and that was his thing. So he walks in – wearing, like, a male dress – and the first thing he did was sit down at the piano and play *Dream On* in its entirety. And that's a five-minute song, y'know?

I spent six hours there, and we wrote a song together (*We're All Somebody From Somewhere*). When it came out, I'm driving home from the studio and he calls me and says: "Come by the house." He gives me this bag and says: "Don't open it until you get home to Evyn" – that's my wife. He kisses me on the lips and says bye.

So I leave, I go to my house, and I'm waiting on Evyn to get home. She goes: "What's that?" I tell her: "Steven gave it to us. He said not to open it until I get home." And she's like: "But what is it?" And I'm like: "I dunno. I'm worried it might be a snake." You never know with those kind of dudes. Is it a brick of cocaine? I don't know!

So I open it up and it's ten thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills, all stacked and taped together. I think he realised I wasn't gonna make a ton of money off producing the song. That's some rock-star shit right there. I called my dad and asked him what to do with the money, and he said: "Either put it in a plastic bag, dig a hole in the back yard and bury it, or tape it to your sink." So to this day it's still taped to the sink!

Ray: Steven gave me a lesson one night too. We were sitting there talking, and he told me: "Never change your hair, because the press will always show photos of you before and after you cut it." Then he said the weirdest thing: "Moisturise. Put lotion on your face. Because you don't look this good at seventy if you don't moisturise."

JACK WHITE

Johnston: We had a little softball league here in Nashville. We'd run around with the Followills from Kings Of Leon, and Jack White and Brendan Benson from The Raconteurs would come play.

Mason: It was, like, a Sunday softball league. We'd all be out till god-knows when on Saturday night, then there'd be this eleven a.m. baseball field call, and we'd all roll out there, still half-drunk from the night before, and go sweat it out playing softball. Jack was a good player. He'd go up there and crank the ball into the outfield. He'd always show up dressed in black, top to bottom.

Johnston: A lot of people say they know Jack, but I'm not sure if anybody really knows him. He's kinda like an enigma, even to us who grew up in Nashville. I've met him several times, but if we saw each other it'd just be like [standoffish]: "Hey man."

BILLY GIBBONS

Johnston: One of our first tours was with ZZ Top. And Billy is a very interesting cat. You go backstage, and he's got a blender with carrots and all that shit and he's making juices all day long. He's got a little sleeping bag in the corner of his dressing room where he takes a nap. It's peculiar. He'd watch our sound-check and say: "You need to get rid of the monitors so the girls can see your boots." Little bits of advice like that.

He's always buying gifts for everybody on the tour. Random shit, man. I remember walking by his dressing room once and he says: "Hey Jaren, I got this for you today at a flea market," and he pulls out this little made-in-China pocket knife and it says on it: 'From the Rev to Jaren'. ➤

|||||
**“Steven Tyler gives me this bag and says: ‘Don’t open
it until you get home to Evyn’ – that’s my wife.
He kisses me on the lips and says bye.”**

Jaren Johnston



EVER MEET LEMMY?

Another time, we go in there and he says: "Check this out, man," and he pulls out this cocaine vial. It's obviously not full of cocaine. He goes: "Hey, I got this today. It's full of ghost pepper chilli powder. You sprinkle this on some chocolate ice cream and things get real weird." So I took it home, and my wife and I did that – and I'm pretty sure we made love for hours.

PARIS HILTON

Johnston: One of the first times we ever went to LA, we were hanging out with Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton at an A&R guy's house. But then Paris lost her cell phone, and she was thinking that somebody had stolen it – and then they start calling us all the worst names that you could call a dude. Like, hurting our feelings, y'know? We were like: "Man, nobody cares about your damn phone!" I'm pretty sure I just left after that, because there were a lot of things going on at that party that I don't think I needed to be a part of. Because, y'know, I'm a nice, church-going Southern Baptist believer, you know what I mean? You gotta keep it on the straight and narrow, son!

CHRISSIE HYNDE

Johnston: Every time we're in London we try to hang out with Chrissie. One time, we'd just got in and were staying somewhere near Hyde Park. That place was rough, man. It smelled like a college dorm, if your grandmother lived there. Chrissie called us and said: "You guys want to go to dinner?" So we go meet her at this bar. It's like, her and Mick Jones from The Clash, a bunch of cool cats. So we had dinner. She doesn't drink, but we partook and we had a good time.

When we get done, we're trying to figure out how to get home, and Chrissie says:

"Hop in my car, I'll drive you guys back to the hotel." So we go to her car, and it's this little Mini Cooper with a British flag on top. And she's from Akron, Ohio, y'know? It's so bizarre. So she gets in and starts driving us home – but like an IndyCar driver, driving stick-shift with her left hand, which most Americans cannot do.

Mason: It was surreal, too, because on the way back it was almost like we were getting the London tourist tour from Chrissie Hynde. She was like: "That's Noel Gallagher's apartment." Y'know, all these rock landmarks.

Johnston: We finally get back to the hotel, she drops us off – "Love you guys" – and we get out and I go: "Was that not the hottest shit you've ever seen in your life?" Y'know, a girl from America speeding us through downtown London, in a Mini Cooper with a British flag on top, driving stick-shift with her left hand?

LUCINDA WILLIAMS

Johnston: We did a cool thing for TV with Dr John and Lucinda Williams in Nashville one night. I mean, what an unsuspecting group of people to come together and play a show, y'know? But we got to really understand why people say certain things about Lucinda, because it is no joke, man, she is very serious. She was worried the TV people were keeping Dr John up too late – because we didn't start playing until after midnight – and she let everybody know about it, man. She was like [furious]: "This man is seventy-seven years old!"

MEAT LOAF

Johnston: Neil and I had written a song for Meat Loaf called *If It Rains*, and I was going upstairs at Sony in Nashville when he hopped in the elevator. So I say: "Hey, man, I'm Jaren." And he goes: "Ah,



"Billy Gibbons would watch our sound-check and say: 'You need to get rid of the monitors so the girls can see your boots.' Little bits of advice like that." Jaren Johnston

you're the little shit who wrote that song – I love it!" We gave him a couple of other ones too. He almost cut an early version of our song *Runnin' Red Lights*. He was a very cool guy. I just kept thinking about *Fight Club*.

Mason: When I met him, he introduced himself as 'Meat'. I just thought that was so weird. Like, shouldn't it be 'Mister Loaf'?

KINGS OF LEON

Johnston: We're good friends with the Kings guys. This story happened before they released *Sex On Fire*. It was one of those nights before we played the softball games. We're in a bar at about two a.m., and they start kicking us out, and we're drunk, and we didn't think we should be kicked out, either because of who we were or how drunk we were. Then one of the bouncers put his hand on one of our girls and all hell broke loose. Somebody hit Jared [Followill, KOL bassist] and I hit them. And then Caleb [Followill, KOL frontman] got hit.

So we're fighting these huge dudes out on the street, and we all had these tight jeans and Beatle boots on. Next morning, it's in the damn paper: 'Tight Jean Tussle!' We're lucky we didn't go to jail. I thought we'd gotten away with it. Then my dad called: "Hey, what did you get up to last night?" And I'm like: "Oh, nothing. I just went out, had some drinks, got back home pretty early." And he's like: "Uh-huh. So you didn't go down to the bar and get into a big fight with the Kings Of Leon, did you?" And I go: "Oh shit!" He says: "It's in the damn paper, son!" So that was not our best moment. But looking back on it, it was pretty funny. I think that's all our stories. That's about twenty-five years of bullshit right there! 🍷

Steven Tyler and Jaren Johnston at the Country Music Hall of Fame And Museum in Nashville in 2015.

The Years Go Fast is out on October 27 via *Big Machine*.



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ROCK HAMMER PROG BLUES

The HOT List

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH
AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR



We never struggle to fill the pages of *Classic Rock*. If anything, the hard part – especially in recent, release-heavy weeks and months – is often deciding who to cover. For every band or artist you'll read about in the magazine, there are almost always several other, eminently worthy candidates that we couldn't fit in. So while festival headliners – and, yes, surefire cover stars – are thinning on the ground, the meat of the rock landscape is in very, very good shape; an embarrassment of first-class,

below-the-surface riches that most of the world doesn't take a look at.

Maybe that's changing. Maybe bands/artists and styles proliferate so quickly these days (for free, mostly online) that we just don't have the same idea of the 'megastar' we once had. In the meantime, it's a nice problem to have, and this month's Hot List cherry-picks some of the best new tracks and bands from rock's ever heaving fruit basket. All very different, something for everyone.

Check out more new music tips (and vote for your favourites in our Tracks Of The Week poll) at classicrockmagazine.com

Green Lung *Mountain Throne*

Are these London rockers the UK's answer to Ghost? Listening to the organ-whirling, Blue Öyster Cult-evoking *Mountain Throne*, we can't help thinking they could be. Either way, it slips down a treat; an oomphy, smoke-wreathed brand of classic rock with a spring in its step. Nodding to the earlier, doomier roots of Tobias Forge and his Ghoulish accomplices, they add their own fusion of NWOBHM grit, twin-lead riffs and bright-eyed, singalong mystique. Watch out for their album *This Heathen Land*, which comes out in November. greenlung.co.uk

Starbenders

Cherry Wine

There's a gauzy dreaminess to *Cherry Wine* that brings out the Fleetwood Mac-y side of these Atlanta glamsters – with an ethereal, slightly otherworldly twist. They do sassy stompiness extremely well, but this track shows them in a silkier light, all twinkly acoustic strumming, spacious 80s tones and sweet melody shot through with melancholia. Gorgeous stuff. Their new album *Take Back The Night* is out now. starbenders.com



Chris Catalyst

Why Can't We All Just Get Along

A man of many guises (his CV includes playing with Sisters Of Mercy, Ugly Kid Joe, Ghost and various others, not to mention his own underrated Eureka Machines), Chris Catalyst writes proper songs, plain and simple. A master of kitchen-sink poetry and spine-tingling pop-rock, he kicks off *Why Can't We All Just Get Along* with the ultra-relatable couplet 'Why are bad things happening to good folks?/Why does my car break when I'm already broke?' If Jeff Lynne were reborn at the height of Britpop, he might have sounded like this. You'll find plenty of party choons and fire starters elsewhere on its parent album *Mad In England*, but for soaring, up-tempo introspection that sticks in the head and tugs at the heartstrings, this one's hard to beat. chriscatalyst.com



The Record Company

Heaven In My Darkest Days

Faced with unprecedented uncertainty in the run-up to their fourth album (including cancelled tours, and being dropped by their label right before Christmas), one of LA's coolest, most authentic rock trios doubled down and returned to what made them click in the first place: raw, old-school rhythm 'n' blues with unvarnished soul. *Heaven In My Darkest Days* is a shining example from the resulting album, the just-released *The 4th Album*, and it captures the toe-tapping, stripped-back blend of honey and grit that first drew us to The Record Company. therecordcompany.net ➤

NOBRO

Let's Do Drugs

This just made us laugh at first, but then we realised we'd been bobbing our heads all the way through, and had to hit replay as soon as it was over. Armed with a liberatingly stupid refrain – 'Let's do drugs! Drugs drugs drugs drugs drugs!' (one YouTube commentator remarked that their seven-year-old is "singing this all the time"; we really hope that's true) – Montreal noiseniks NOBRO have created a silly yet super-effective banger that bemoans the trials of ageing with a smile. Musically they call it "a middle ground between *Fight For Your Right To Party* and *Dirty Deeds*, but only the dumbest bits of those songs", which is pretty spot-on. nobroband.com



Mother Vulture

Go Big Or Go Home

These Bristol-based firebrands are back – and they're *really* back, as this deliciously mad, shouty fistful of punkoid ferocity and deep, fat rock riffs confirms. *Go Big Or Go Home* has old-school rock'n'roll in its veins and a throat full of metallic hardcore. Sort of like The Who trading licks with Enter Shikari, but zanier and sweatier, almost cartoonish with the pop-eyed mania of Georgi's vocals. Where others would play it cool, everything here bristles with intent. When they scream: 'I'm gonna make it if it kills me,' you believe them. facebook.com/MotherVulture



Super City *Get Outta Here*

This is a lot of fun. Short, sharp and seriously addictive, *Get Outta Here* is so buzzy you can feel the coffee shakes coming through these Baltimore rockers' limbs. But it's a cool, swaggery buzz, with a pulsating bass line that keeps it all rocking – rather than buzzing off altogether like some sort of hyperactive bee. It's like hearing The Knack's *My Sharona* getting a dancey makeover by Royal Republic, with the tin-can sound of 00s guitar wavers like The Strokes and The Hives. Sounds fun, is fun.

facebook.com/supercitymusic



Des Rocs *I Am the Lightning*

If Royal Blood and Muse had a baby, and raised it on Elvis Presley records, it would have turned out a lot like Des Rocs (aka New York artiste/genre-masher Daniel Rocco), on the evidence of this blistering slice of his new album *Dream Machine*. Combining impishly suave, classic-sounding vocals with industrial flavours and modern turbo-blues riffage, it'd be a mighty big sound coming from a group, never mind one guy. Trent Reznor-style, Rocco crafted his brand of 'bedroom arena rock' alone, dreaming of huge stages and ultimately making it, band in tow – playing support slots with Rolling Stones and the aforementioned Muse, among others.

desrocs.com

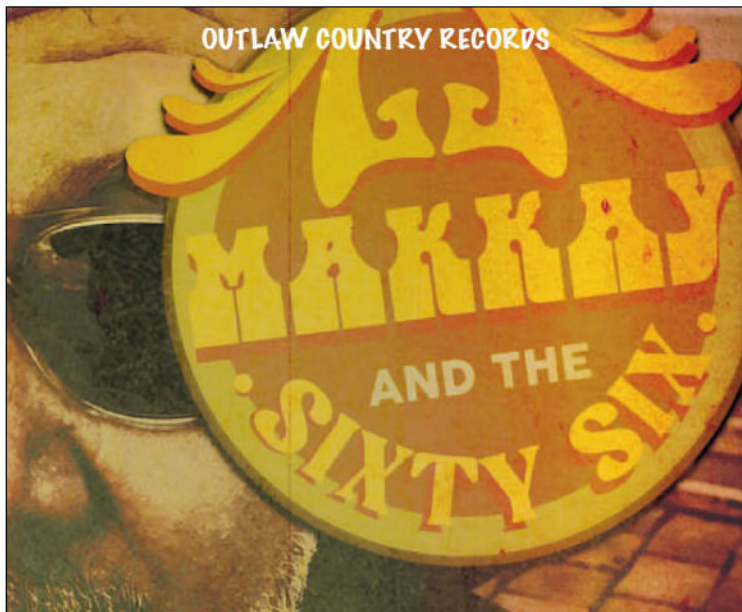


And keep an ear out for... Bad Nerves

We've been fans of these Essex power-pop punks since their self-titled debut came out at the tail end of 2020. To the converted they were the breath of instant-gratification exuberance we needed – the album offering a fiercely addictive rush of wall-to-wall bangers, most of them around two minutes long and all played at a hundred miles an hour.

Now they look set to reach a load more people, as they gear up for bigger things, including a second album, support slots with Royal Blood in America and with The Darkness on their *Permission To Land* anniversary dates. New single *USA* kicks it all off. A good way to butter up prospective new fans across the pond? Possibly. Either way, we heard it when they opened for The Struts, and it's the sort of insistent, snotty sugar rush that few could resist chanting along to.

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P 74

Rolling Stones

Their first album of original material in 18 years is a *Diamond*.

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



The Rolling Stones

Hackney Diamonds POLYDOR

Rock blueprint's first album of original material in 18 years.



According to Mick Jagger, *Hackney Diamonds* producer/bassist Andrew Watt “kicked us up the arse”. Watt’s USP is his ability to put artists back in touch with who they actually are. He recently coaxed the remarkable *Every Loser* out of Iggy Pop by asking him: “Are you ready to be yourself?” And it seems he’s done it again, because the Stones haven’t delivered an album this quintessentially Stonesy in 40 years. That said, *Hackney Diamonds* is no museum piece. It’s a 21st-century record for a 21st-century audience that, with an old-school 48-minute duration, only ever leaves the listener hungry for more.

Opener and lead single *Angry* benefits from a contemporary production that doesn’t go too far. Watt plays it just right across the entire album, as he modernises the Stones without once dressing them in a sound that doesn’t suit them.

Following the muscular, riff-driven *Get Close*, *Depending On You* is a classic Stones ballad: pedal steel, subtle strings, cascading keyboards, and Jagger, *I’m too young to die, but too old to lose* (with the merest suggestion of contemporising auto-tune) on heartbreakingly fine form.

Second stropky ‘Why?’ song *Bite My Head Off* finds Paul McCartney pumping out a slack-jawed, punked-up bass solo and Keith being so unapologetically Keith

that it’s all you can do not to punch the air. *Whole Wide World* boasts a chorus to die for (and Jagger never more deliciously ‘Lahndan’ in his over-sold vernacular), *Dreamy Skies* a reflective country blues with a melody line reminiscent of *Short And Curlies*, before two back-to-back Charlie Watts-featuring tracks (elsewhere Steve Jordan shines reliably), Chic-y floor-filler *Mess It Up* and Bill Wyman-benefitting textbook Stones rocker *Live By The Sword*, with loose-ass handclaps and miles of Keith and Ronnie’s intricately woven ancient art to unravel.

Driving Me Too Hard finds Jagger on the unfortunate end of a cruel, mistreating woman, and *Tell Me Straight* a mournful Keith musing: ‘Is my future all in the past?’ Gospel epic *Sweet Sound Of Heaven* is a Jagger master class, Lady GaGa in fine voice, with Stevie Wonder also in evidence, but as with all the album’s guest slots (Elton John also serves) no one outshines the Stones. Performances serve songs rather than egos. And finally, *Rolling Stone* (the Muddy Waters tune that gave the band their name) closes the circle. Raw, stripped, flawless, it’s an unspoken message for all who choose to receive it.

Brilliant.

★★★★★★★★ Ian Fortnam

Romeo's Daughter

Slipstream RD

Persistent soft-rockers hit the bullseye a second time.

Confusion reigned in 1988 when *Romeo's Daughter* released an immaculate debut album produced by the celebrated Robert John ‘Mutt’ Lange in cahoots with John ‘St Elmo’s Fire’ Parr. Were the UK-based, female-fronted band rock, pop or a hi-tech AOR wet dream?

Although the public never really embraced *Romeo's Daughter* as the band deserved, singer Leigh Matty, guitarist Craig Joiner and drummer Andy Wells didn’t give up, and *Slipstream* is their first album in eight years and fifth overall. It’s also the best thing they’ve done since that eye- and ear-catching introductory statement of 35 years ago.

My favourite moments from *Slipstream* rotate steadily, each of its first four selections, including *Over You*, *Inseparable* and the soft-rock master class *How Does It Feel*, claiming top spot on any given day, although with a sparking mix from Jeff Knowler (of FM fame) there are gems galore right down the playlist.

This album is gorgeous.

★★★★★★★★ Dave Ling

Within Temptation

Bleed Out FORCE MUSIC

Dutch symphonic metallers return in pleasingly familiar form.



Bands often insist: “It would have been so easy for us to have made

another [insert name of successful album here].” But in truth, repeating a winning formula is a tough ask, and the pressure of doing so can often be relieved by taking a stylistic left turn. So respect to these Dutch symphonic metal stalwarts for unashamedly focusing on their strengths and playing to them on this eighth studio album.

The combined assault of *We Go To War* followed by the title track deliver the key elements of vintage Within Temptation: huge, yearning-to-the-heavens choruses reaching out from gut-pummelingly heavy rock riffing. While elsewhere the band’s integration of influences such as post-hardcore are in evidence on the scatter-gun invective of *Shed My Skin*, their taste for

making an alluringly melodic melodrama out of a crisis is still as vibrant as ever.

★★★★★★★★

Johnny Sharp

KK's Priest

The Sinner Rides Again

NAPALM

The apocalypse is nigh (part 182).



Do KK’s Priest (featuring ex-Judas Priest guitarist KK Downing and

Tim ‘Ripper’ Owens, Priest singer 1996-2003) provide a credible alternative to the real thing? They do not.

The Sinner Rides Again, the band’s second album, suffers from the same faults as their first. In Downing’s eyes (and ears), nothing has changed in the heavy metal world since Priest’s *Painkiller* in 1990. It’s all grinding desperation and lank-haired perspiration. There’s no light and shade, only doom and demolition. If you’re gonna get mauled by a lion, at least make it interesting. This album is so one-dimensional that one begins to question the very existence of the Spider-Verse. Echoes of Accept and Manowar exacerbate the archaic vibe. We’ve heard it all before – and better. The album’s highlight is *Hymn 66*, even if it is basically a rewrite of *Dissident Aggressor*.

In old-school reviewing terms, *The Sinner Rides Again* scrapes a – sadly appropriate – KK rating. In other words:

★★★★

Geoff Barton

Candlebox

The Long Goodbye ROUND HILL

Seattle alt.rockers ride off into the sunset with their eighth and final album.



Because their Seattle contemporaries – Nirvana, Soundgarden,

Pearl Jam – were grabbing all the headlines at the time, it’s easy to overlook how successful Candlebox were with their self-titled debut album of 1993. They never matched its creative or commercial heights again. Now, to mark its 30th anniversary, they’re splitting up, with a farewell tour and this album to act as their swan song.

Frontman Kevin Martin is clearly in no mood to inspire the next generation, though. Opener *Punks* is a spiky, incongruously catchy warning to today’s bright

young things that they won't be flavour of the month for long, and that chances at the big time are gone the moment they arrive. It's a moment of supreme bitterness – certainly *I Should Be Happy* does nothing to dispel the sour taste of grand disillusionment – but the rest of the record opens up into a collection of serviceably solid alt-rock stompers, fat-chorused mood pieces (*Elegante*) and moments of acoustic contemplation (*Maze*).

By any account, 30 years is a good innings, but *The Long Goodbye* doesn't sugarcoat the regrets, frustrations and disappointments littering the Candlebox timeline.



Emma Johnston

Nervosa

Jailbreak NAPALM

Thrash metal lives.



Thrash metal turns 40 in 2023 – old enough for it to have said all it

has to say – twice over. Nervosa certainly aren't bringing anything new to the party.

Centred on Brazilian founder and guitarist Prika Amaral but very much an international (and all-female) operation these days, this fifth album follows a familiar pattern: vocals roar gutturally, guitars wail and shred, and a barrage of drums

hammers like a construction site at 7.30am. But what *Jailbreak* lacks in originality it makes up for in energy. *Suffocare* and *Seed Of Death* might be meat-and-potatoes extreme metal, but at least they're served up with a savage intensity.

Recent line-up changes have seen Amaral step up as singer, and she spits out *Endless Ambition* and *Kill Or Die* with malevolent intent, while Exodus guitarist and thrash founding father Gary Holt lends the record some old-school heft via an appearance on *When The Truth Is A Lie*.

Exhilarating, if not world-changing.



Dave Everley

Diamond Dogs

The Hardest Nut To Crack

WILD KINGDOM

Boogie-loving Swedes keep fighting the good-time fight.

There are some kinds of music that simply have to be consumed live, preferably with several alcoholic drinks consumed. Swedish institution Diamond Dogs specialise in exactly that kind of barroom boogie, and doubtless several of the tunes on this twelfth studio album will be sung along to loudly and lustily in concert.

But in the studio, even though they've recorded them live, the tracks just sound a bit... meh.

Get A Rock'N'Roll Record hits the

spot squarely enough by resembling Chuck Berry on steroids, and when they add a glam-metal chorus on *Rising From The Ruins* or filter in Georgia Satellites-style southern boogie on *Keep Drippin Down* they start to strut more compellingly, and the touches of fiddle on *Blight The Life* and *Desiree*, *Yet Another Lonely Mile* add downhome country charm. But elsewhere, too often the choogle starts to sound more like a chore.

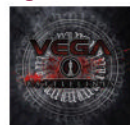


Johnny Sharp

Vega

Battlelines FRONTIERS

British melodic rock flag bearers stick to their guns eight albums in.



Wait around long enough, and everything comes back into fashion – with the exception of melodic rock. Thankfully, Vega never got the memo. The British five-piece's eighth album is an exhilarating slab of 80s-influenced hard rock that wears its love of good old-fashioned tuneage and choruses the size of the Empire State Building with rightful pride. Singer Nick Workman belts out *Heroes And Zeroes* and *Don't Let Them See You Bleed* like he's playing to the back row of Madison Square Garden.

Vega aren't going to shift Bon Jovi or Def Leppard numbers of records, but that's hardly their fault. Fashions come and go but quality endures, and *Battlelines* has quality in spades.



Dave Everley

Staind

Confessions Of The Fallen

ALCHEMY/BMG

Massachusetts metallers hit the comeback trail.



In the 12 years since Staind's last, self-titled album, singer Aaron Lewis has repositioned himself as a country-singing, 'MAGA'-hat wearing, anti-woke warrior, with all the angry-white-man bullshit that comes along with it. Thankfully the politics have been parked for his band's eighth album. Instead it offers an impressively muscular update of the two-parts-grunge-to-one-part-nu-metal formula that made Staind's name around the turn of the millennium.

Lewis's politics may be divisive, verging on the toxic, but he's got a hell of a voice, shifting from angsty rage on the propulsive modern metal of *Lowest In Me* and to the mournfully powerful delivery of stately ballad *Better Days* (the latter sounds like a fleshed out update of their massive 2001 hit *It's Been Awhile*), while *Hate Me*

Too shows some degree of self-awareness. If it's possible to uncouple the band and their singer's politics, this album is an impressive comeback.



Dave Everley

Beartooth

The Surface RED BULL

US modern metallers show their class on fifth album.

'I'm not dead yet,' Beartooth singer Caleb Shomo howls on the opening title track of the band's fifth album, his voice equal parts insecurity and defiance. The Ohio band may have risen through the metalcore scene, but their frontman and chief songwriter is a hard rocker at heart. Strip away the roared vocals and the slightly plastic, of-the-moment production, and the likes of *Riptide* and the 'whoah-oh-oh'-propelled *What Are You Waiting For* beat with a melodic heart.

Shomo is the hub around which everything revolves here. It's his voice and hi-wattage charisma that separates Beartooth from their modern-metal contemporaries, even when the angst and self-laceration becomes overwhelming to the point of cliché. But it's his lived experience, and *The Surface* has enough musical and emotional power to forge a path of its own through well-trodden terrain.



Dave Everley

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

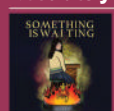
By Sleazegrinder



Something Is Waiting: the nu-roll kick in the nuts you've been waiting for.

Something Is Waiting

Absolutely SELF-RELEASED



I know I've probably said it before a couple times in the past few months, but I really mean it this time: this is the best record of the year. Maybe of the decade. Maybe of your whole dumb life. *Something Is Waiting*

do not look like a sleaze-metal band, and would never call themselves one, but they are. If Love/Hate were surrealist punks, if Faster Pussycat were intellectual juggernauts, if Tom Keifer's mouth could stretch even wider, they might be as good as *Something Is Waiting*. Probably not. Frontman Eddie Gobbo's inhuman screech is the sound of an acid devil tearing his own eyes out. Will Fay's

guitar blats a hideous noise that rivals *The Mentally Ill* (look it up) for sheer revulsion, but it works perfectly in this context, a rusty dagger dripping disease and decay jabbed full force into your guts. From the hardcore glam of *House Of Style* to the GN'R slither of *Get Your Gimmicks*, this is the nu-roll kick in the nuts you've been waiting for.



Enduro

Mean Jean Jacket

SELF-RELEASED



This is the first new music from Austin drunk'n'rollers Enduro since 2005, and they still swing, stagger and bleed raw, dirty rock'n'roll. With its heroic swagger, this sounds like the kind of band Kim Fowley would form during a bleary-eyed birthday party where half the band die of alcohol consumption before the record even gets released.



Mad Brother Ward And The Abrasives

All Bad All The Time RUINED



North Carolina punk'n'roll semi-legend MBW and co. play trashy, high-speed tunes that drip with venom and sarcasm in classic 70s punk fashion. They are also insanely catchy. Like any band that's been around for over 30 years, they are concerned about what the fuck is going on. A wild, entertaining ride.



La Chinga

Primal Forces RIPPLE



With each subsequent release, Vancouver arena-sleaze champs La Chinga go for bigger, bolder vision. *Primal Forces* is a mountain-scraping beast of a record. It's like some long-lost multimillion-dollar hard rock record from 1978, all swivel-hipped guitars, throbbing bass lines, punchy, scream-along choruses, and a satisfying crunch that demands repeat visits. Heavy shit.



Sadistic Force

Midnight Assassin

SELF-RELEASED



Ever since *Turbonegro* released that disco album, blackened speed-metal has become the new baseline for true rock'n'roll. Austin's Sadistic Force are one of the sub-sub genre's bleeding lights. This album revels in high-speed riff'n'roll chaos.

Man, I'm glad Satan got back into rock. He really does make it better.

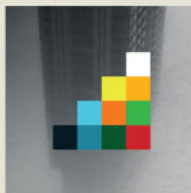




Steven Wilson

The Harmony Codex VIRGIN

Solo album number seven triumphs by not trying too hard.



Thirty-three years after the self-pressed single *Colours*, a Donovan cover which all but invented trip-hop, gave his first significant outlet No-Man their ingress, Steven Wilson finds himself in a unique position: he's very successful, both as a ferociously inventive solo artist and as leader of Porcupine Tree. Yet nobody seems sure how to categorise him. Which, actually, is great. Too prog for the prog-averse, not prog enough for prog diehards. He's made a lot of electronic music in recent years, yet is rarely cited as a luminary of electronica. He's acknowledged as a techy sound wizard, although his later albums have passionately questioned the health of our screen-addicted world. In a time of boxes and groupings, Wilson is a maverick outlier, a polite dissident who does his own thing. Or rather, his own various things, whether that leads him into pop, pomp or a kind of musical polymathy.

If previous albums have sometimes skidded with screeches between genres, that solves any such jump-cut issues by blending his skills with remarkable fluidity. It's as if he's stopped stressing – impressive as *The Future Bites* was, it felt self-consciously 'big' – and allowed all the muses in his head to hang, chill and jam. This one's about memory, more than

future shock. You absolutely believe his anecdote that the Christmas his parents exchanged Pink Floyd and Donna Summer albums as gifts was his origin myth. Like the best Tears For Fears records, when they float into zones that might be described as 'funk Floyd', *The Harmony Codex*, by relaxing, relaxes you into it.

It's an hour-plus of music that glides seamlessly from skittering digital soul to Gilmouresque soft guitars to colossal riffing to eerie spoken word to honeyed tunefulness. It's gothic (in the true sense), grandiose when it wants to be, gentle because it's so robust it has nothing to prove. Like its centrepiece (well, one of them) *Impossible Tighrope*, it's a high-wire act that few artists could pull off. That 10-minute construction itself shifts from a string overture to a metal-adjacent rush to a whispering piano to what might be Yes playing Chairmen Of The Board's *Skin I'm In*. *Economies Of Scale* is like hearing Radiohead reclining luxuriously in an infinity pool, whereas the title track poses as elegant minimalism of the Sakamoto/Vangelis school, until you realise it's got your emotions all in a proper tizzy. It would be an obtuse listener who didn't grasp how splendid this record is.

★★★★★

Chris Roberts

Roger Waters

The Dark Side Of The Moon Redux SGB/COOKING VINYL

Because there was so much wrong with the original.

At the start of this *Redux*'s version of *Brain Damage*, Roger Waters asks: "Why don't we re-record [the album]?" before answering his own question: "He's gone mad." As it turns out, the actual record – timed for the 50th anniversary of *The Dark Side's* release is fine: neither a massive gutting of the original nor a slavish copy.

It opens with Waters intoning the lyrics of *Free Four* from Floyd's *Obscured By Clouds*, and takes it from there. *Time* now sounds like a boulder rolled up a hill, weary and aged. *Brain Damage* and *Us And Them* are half-crooned and very effective. The music of *On The Run* is now the backing track for Waters reciting a story about good and evil, as is *Money*, sung in the voice of a distracted bear. *The Great Gig In The Sky* is Waters's tribute to a deceased friend, the poet Donald Hall. There is also, apparently, a bonus 13-minute original composition, but you have to buy the album to hear that. *Redux* is well thought out, and it works.

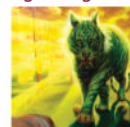
★★★★★

David Quantick

Rival Sons

Lightbringer ATLANTIC

Same but different: Rival Sons complete their Yin & Yang pairing of *Darkfighter* with *Lightbringer*.



Californian rockers Rival Sons follow up the release of *Darkfighter*

earlier this year with an exploration of those emotions we are prone to burying. Mercy explores the kinetic nature of anger alongside *Redemption*, declaring: 'trauma hides what it doesn't destroy'.

The opening track links the record with its 'sister' in an explosive, almost nine-minute epic, decrying: 'I wanna be a darkfighter, lightbringer till the end', although for all the emotional angst, archetypal Rival Sons does prevail. *Sweet Life* injects a dark groove into your bones but leaves enough room for Jay Buchanan's lung-singing vocals.

Closing a record that scoops out the grit of human emotion and handles it at uncomfortably close range, *Mosaic* is the crack in the clouds, concluding that 'the broken pieces fit together'.

In among the messy tangle of human souls, Rival Sons prove there is always room for the light to get in.

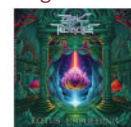
★★★★★

Phoebe Flys

Ozric Tentacles

Lotus Unfolding KSCOPE

First album since 2020 from longtime festival stalwarts.



Written and produced by OT main man Ed Wynne, with assistance from

his brother Silas, and helpers including Saskia Maxwell on flute, *Lotus Unfolding* is another heady trip around planet Ozric, designed to sooth and energise. Each track takes you on a similar upward trajectory, where the skies are radiantly blue throughout, the earth below verdant. But like those people who walk through life with a permanent smile on their face, it's impossible to resent them, or their dedication to raising the spirit.

From the scampering synths and Orb-like sky-sweeping ascension of *Storm In A Teacup*, to the Weather Report-like colour and velocity of *Green Incantation*, to the fluttering flute of the meditative title track, to the fast-cut evocative guitar of *Crumplepenny*, to the excellent, more shaded *Burundi Spaceport*, this is truly sanguine, summer's-day music, little more but nothing less.

★★★★★

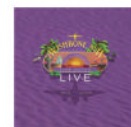
David Stubbs

Wishbone Ash

Live Dates Live

1973 – 2023 STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Fiftieth-anniversary new live version of their celebrated live album.



Playing one of your albums live in full and in sequence is a thing these

days, as is then releasing the recordings. But that's doing studio albums. Releasing a new live album that's one of your live albums played in full and in sequence is, many (most?) might say, somewhat pointless.

Wishbone Ash's celebrated 1973 live album *Live Dates* captured the band at their peak, flushed with the success of the previous year's now-classic *Argus*, delivering impressive, high-flying performances of *The King Will Come*, *Pilgrim*, *Blowin' Free*, *Throw Down The Sword*, lengthy closer *Phoenix* and the

rest. *Live Dates Live*, with okay vocals, guitar solos, overall performances and everything else, is, inevitably, always going to come off second-best, and does so by some stretch.

For all its actual faultlessness, it's difficult to imagine any Ash fan listening to this album and not comparing it unfavourably with the original. Imagine, say, *Live And Dangerous* re-done by the most recent Thin Lizzy, or *Live At Leeds* by today's Who. Better still, don't.

★★★★★

Paul Henderson

Graveyard

6 NUCLEAR BLAST

Psychedelic raves from the grave.



Yet another band whose plans were derailed by the pandemic.

Five years have passed since Graveyard's *Peace* album, but the minimally titled 6 finds the heavy-rocking Swedes returning in rude health. Their second album from the line-up of vocalist/guitarist Joakim Nilsson, guitarist Jonatan Ramm, bassist Truls Mörrck and drummer Oskar Bergenheim, this is a more inward-looking and melancholy Graveyard, world-weary yet able to fire things up when it matters. Tracks like the ramshackle *Twice*, *Just A Drop* and the soulful, ever-

building *No Way Out* are driven and focused, but the dominant feel is raw, mellow and groovy – *Bright Lights* finds the band drifting lysergically down desert highways, *Sad Song* easily lives up to its title, and the superb *Breathe In Breathe Out* features Nilsson channelling the spirit of Mark Lanegan at his dusty, southern gothic best.

This album is a master class in psychedelic light and shade.

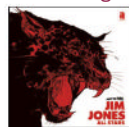
★★★★★

Essi Berelian

Jim Jones All Stars

Ain't No Peril AKA-LITE

Greased-up, chin-punching shin-kicking rock'n'roll.



Roughly 10 years ago I was one of the blessed few who witnessed the Jim Jones Revue burning a Dublin club to the ground. 'Incendiary' is too small a word for it. Jones's new incarnation, the All Stars, continue that holy work. This debut album is filthier than a mechanic's rag, sleazier than a Soho spiv, and scuzzier than a tequila hangover. It's rock'n'roll as the gods intended.

Recorded in Memphis, because of course it was, it flings it up in fine style. The sinuous honk of *It's Your Voodoo Working* and the rump-shaking ramalama of *Gimme The Grease* lay it down, then the Stone-Age

clang of *Troglodyte* and the aromatic howl of *You Got The Best Stink (I Ever Stunk)* – song title of the year – knock it out over the wall. There's even room for groovy instrumentals such as *Hot Sauce*, *Chingón* and the Morricone-scores-Guy-Ritchie *Drink Me*.

Call it garage rock, but only if your mechanic soups up hot rods by filling the tank with nitroglycerin. Get down and get with it.

★★★★★

Pat Carty

Goat

Medicine ROCKET RECORDINGS

Mysterious psych tribe palm us more heady chant-rock pharmaceuticals.

It seems a small miracle that Sweden's Goat have been together 10 years and reached album number five with their mythology largely intact. Still little is known about these ritual-masked hypno-rockers supposedly from the cursed town of Korpilombolo, and on *Medicine* they fully play on the mysticism, allure and death-cult menace that allows them. One minute they're intoning: 'I will find a way to find you... I'm going to relieve you of your soul' over sitar and backwards guitar, like the monster from *It Follows* taking the form of 1968 George Harrison, the next, to *You'll Be Alright*'s tones of psych-era Floyd and no little jazz flute,

they're offering comfort and reassurance: 'I'll be right there.'

Goat's merging of blues-metal drones, jackal-bone rhythms, pastoral Swedish psych-folk and warped Zeppelin grooves remains consuming – if a touch overdone by now – but it's refreshing to be jolted out of whack here and there by a fuzz-metal freak-out like *Join The Resistance*, an impassioned cry for revolution from the ghost dimension. It's the *Medicine* we need, and it works best when they up the dosage.

★★★★★

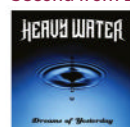
Mark Beaumont

Heavy Water

Dreams Of Yesterday

SILVER LINING MUSIC

Second from Biff & Son.



A follow-up to 2021's *Red Brick City*, the lockdown project by

Saxon's Biff Byford and his son Seb Byford. Seb (on guitar and most lead vocals) is the star, but Biff can't help weighing in.

The old man, who sounds plenty capable on bass, seems over-keen to broaden his horizons – with the cod-grunge *How Much Can You Take* and *Castaway*, and some would-be punkish moves late in the running order – but every time his voice is heard he resurrects Saxon. Shut up, dad!

It's a shame, because Seb's

voice is stronger, and the best tracks here are those on which he sings the most: the brilliant swaggering opener *Dreams Of Yesterday*, *Shadows Of Life* and the slower, bluesy *Never Love Again*.

★★★★★

Neil Jeffries

Brian Protheroe

A Salisbury Boy BANDCAMP

Sparkling seventh studio album from multi-tasking songsmith.

Brian Protheroe might forever be best known for 1974's existential hit single *Pinball*, but his 50-year career has spanned both music and the performing arts.

A successful actor who has appeared in *Spooks* and *Midsomer Murders*, among other things, he is also the narrator of Channel 4's long-running series *First Dates*.

The follow-up to 2020's *Desert Road* finds the venerable 79-year-old in a rich vein of form, pinballing (!) between folk ballads (*Salisbury Boys*), witty odes to Mozart (*Wolfgang!*) and soulful meditations on life (*Sentimental Tale*), all sprinkled with choice one-liners. The bonus ball comes with jaunty Wings-style power-pop gem *Over Your Love*, in which he confesses: 'That cosy life is not for me, I'd rather be solitary', a free-wheeling troubadour to the end. Ace.

★★★★★

Paul Moody

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling



Streetlight: a bright start from a band with huge potential.

Streetlight

Ignition FRONTIERS



The key indications were good: the band's name, the album sleeve, which looked like it had been

unearthed in a vinyl basement during the 80s, and, most importantly, the dancing keyboard intro to the sublime opening track *Hit The Ground*. But could *Ignition*,

the introductory statement from a previously unknown five-piece out of Jönköping, Sweden, maintain that level of impetus over 11 tracks? The answer is a resounding 'Yes'.

Streetlight will never win prizes for originality, but they do the important stuff simply and well. Johannes Häger has a strong, confident voice, and his guiding role in the album's sonics (he's a producer) is every bit as impressive.

It's almost impossible to listen to *Chutes And Ladders*, *Closer* or *Caught Up In A Dream* without thinking of Journey, Toto, Foreigner, Kansas, Survivor, Chicago or Def Leppard, but if you're going to borrow, do it from the best. What's more they've made this record without an army of co-writers, arrangers and studio gurus.

Ignition is a bright start from a band with huge potential.

★★★★★

Jelusick

Follow The Blind Man

ESCAPE MUSIC



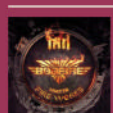
Two years ago, Dino Jelusick became a keyboard player and backing singer for Whitesnake. Jelusick

(the band) are a vehicle for the broader talents of the Croatian multi-instrumentalist, although it's no surprise that the distinctive scales of the 'Snake coil themselves tightly around an array of flashy, bruising hard hitters.

★★★★★

Nitrate

Feel The Heat FRONTIERS



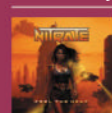
Album number four from this steadily improving British band once again features vocals from

Alexander Strandell of Art Nation and Crowne, with Martin twins Tom and James (formerly of Vega) performing and contributing to the writing. *All The Right Moves*, *Satellite* and *One Kiss (To Save My Heart)*, a sultry duet with Issa, will delight fans of 80s AOR.

★★★★★

Bonfire

MMXXIII (Re-recorded) AFM



In which the current line-up of the enduring German band retool their three career-defining albums *Don't Touch The Light*, *Fireworks* and *Point Blank*, all released between '86 and '89. There are some truly fantastic tracks here, but Dyan Mair's voice is just too shrill and metalised. The golden rule still applies: don't fix the bloody thing if it ain't broken.

★★★★★

Sam Millar

More Cheese Please

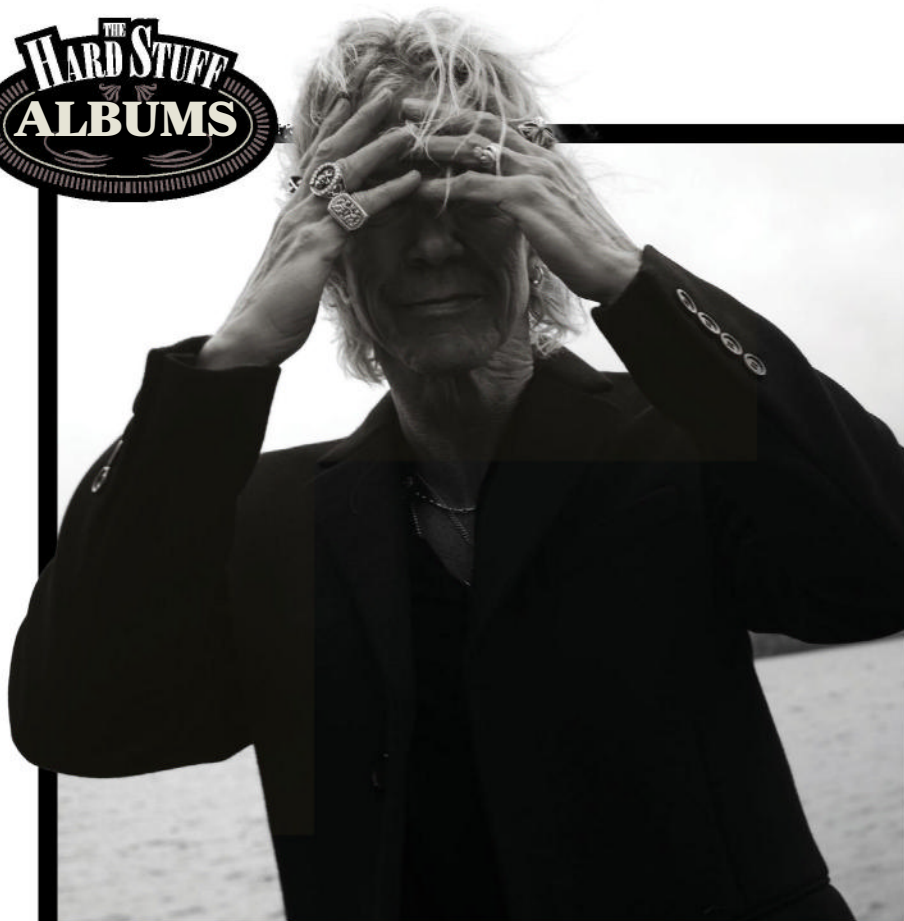
SAMMILLAR.CO.UK



Sam Millar was a guitarist and writer for the now defunct Bigfoot. This album sees him indulge his

private love of melodic retro-rock. Full of clever ear worms and fist-punching choruses, it's a joyous, irrepressible record that will surely figure among the best independently issued melodic records of 2023.

★★★★★



Duff McKagan

Lighthouse BFD/ORCHARD/SONY

Guns N' Roses bassist delivers full-beam brilliance on his third solo album.



Middle age suits Duff McKagan well, given that there was a time when it looked like he might not make it this far. He was walking the line long before he joined Guns N' Roses, fleeing his native Seattle in his early twenties to escape the influx of heroin ripping through the punk scene in which he'd come of age, only to arrive in LA and plunge headfirst into the alcoholism that ultimately led to the exploding pancreas that almost killed him at 30.

It's all here on *Lighthouse*. Broadly following the same rootsy path as 2019's stripped-back *Tenderness*, it dials back some of its predecessor's more countrified elements, occasionally pouring a shot of punk rock urgency into the punch bowl.

McKagan wears both the scars and the wisdom of almost 60 years on this planet without shame. 'I washed up on the rocks, all broke up on the stone,' he sings on the gospel-tinged title track, his endearingly reedy voice shot through with emotion as he looks back on a life spent battered by the waves of chaos, misfortune and self-inflicted mistakes. But there's a joyous, redemptive quality to it too: 'Oh shine on me my lighthouse,' he sings, offering a glimpse of a happy ending, 'and dry these aching bones'.

That mix of vulnerability and positivity

runs through *Lighthouse*. The heart-on-sleeve *I Just Don't Know* (featuring acoustic guitars from Alice In Chains guitarist Jerry Cantrell) finds the older McKagan looking back on his younger self and seeing only youthful uncertainty (that song is given a run for its melodic money by the coruscating *Holy Water*). The electrifying *Hope*, featuring some killer guitar from Slash, is more pleading and less assuredly positive than its title would suggest.

But *Lighthouse* is anything but a morose pity party. *Longfeather*, inspired by late author Cormac McCarthy, is a knockout hard rocker with barrelling piano and propulsive drums. Folk-punk romp *I Saw God On 10th St.* and sparkling country rock gem *Forgiveness* both barely bother to conceal the despair at the state of humanity, but they do it with humour and a light touch.

It might all seem a long way from the howling urban venom and party-hard hedonism of GN'R in their prime, let alone McKagan's teenage punk bands The Fartz, Vains and The Fastbacks, but there's an honesty to *Lighthouse* that echoes all the way back to those more chaotic days. You can take the kid out of punk rock, but you can't take punk rock out of the kid.



Dave Everley

Inger Lorre

Gloryland KITTEN ROBOT

Eccentric former Nymphs singer returns.



Gloryland is Inger Lorre's first album since 1999's *Transcendental*

Medication. It's less raucous and more country/Americana in style, but still edgy thanks to Nashville multi-instrumentalist Buddy Woodward co-producing alongside LA punk veteran Paul Roessler.

Lorre has overcome a lot, not least her addictions and the loss of her friend Jeff Buckley. Such torments inform reflective opener *More Real*, which she says is "about the wisdom earned through suffering". Similarly, the haunting piano-laced lament *Song For Elliott Smith* pays tribute to the loner-folkie singer who died in violent circumstances in 2003.

Black Sons echoes Led Zeppelin's *When The Levee Breaks*, and her extraordinary voice ranges from deep fury to high register. She sings equally brilliantly on *Death Is A Horizon* and *Learn To Die*. More left-field are her cover of PJ Proby's 1967 hit *Nicky Hoeky* and the mandolin-laced *Om Gan* mantra, while the title track is the bluegrass standard.

An engagingly eclectic collection from someone too gifted to be ignored.



Neil Jeffries

Chris Catalyst

Mad In England WRATH

Ex-Sisters/Ghost (et al) guitarist's third solo album.



Hard-working and talented gun for hire Chris Catalyst has an

impeccable CV of jobbing guitarist positions, but it's high time that his talents as a songwriter and multi-instrumentalist were recognised. Hopefully *Mad In England*, his third solo album, will help achieve that.

Lyrically it's a sardonic 21st-century Paul Welleresque meditation on the English condition. Musically the crunching pop-rock of the title track and *Butterfly Or Bull* is reminiscent of classic British guitar rock from the Manics, New Model Army and The Wildhearts. But saying that is possibly a disservice to his extensive diversity of sounds;

Stop is Britrock-meets-Sleaford Mods, *How?* is Flaming Lips-style psyche, *My Family* is a pop-punk number, albeit tongue-in-cheek. If there's anything negative to say about *Mad In England*, it's that Catalyst's impressively broad disparate variety of styles doesn't slot easily into a pre-determined forensic taxonomy of 2023 rock. He's literally too clever for his own good.



Alex Burrows

Crime & The City Solution

the killer MUTE

Compelling return to the Crime scene.



Formed in 1977 in Australia by lifelong mainstay Simon Bonney, Crime

& The City Solution moved through line-ups and cities to Melbourne, where he befriended The Birthday Party, following them to London in 1983. Along with violinist partner Bronwyn Adams, Bonney's new CATCS, including Mick Harvey, Rowland S Howard and brother Harry, released four albums between '86 and '90 before splitting.

After re-forming CATCS for 2013's *American Twilight*, Bonney delivered aid programmes until lockdown inspired writing about his traumatic experiences then recording *the killer* in Berlin with producer Martin J Fiedler.

Harrowingly dense slowies like *Rivers Of Blood* and *Peace In My Time* can be uncomfortably soul-baring, Bonney's dramatic vocal performances evocatively embellished with synths and unsettling counter voices. *Killer* becomes the ominously reflective centrepiece as Bonney's 'I feel your pain, please don't kill me' mantra dissolves into nightmare turmoil.

Not easy listening but well worth the effort.



Kris Needs

Crosses

Goodnight, God Bless, I Love U, Delete WARNERS

Deftones frontman's side project returns with album two.



On their formation in the early 2010s, Chino Moreno described this un-Googleable band (stylised with three crucifixes) as



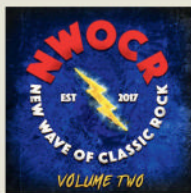
When Rivers Meet

Various

New Wave Of Classic Rock Volume 2

NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK/ROCK PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Another 40-plus bands showcase their classically rocking wares.



So 2021's *New Wave of Classic Rock Volume 1* was popular enough to warrant another epic two-CD release. *Volume 2* is here to prove that the concept still has legs, presumably clad in traditional stripy spandex with a couple of gym socks shoved down the front.

Compiled with the aid of a fan vote, *Volume 2* doesn't repeat any bands from *Volume 1*, and presents 41 tracks – one less than its predecessor – covering a whole load of rock and blues talent, some new, some not so new, the range guaranteeing that there really is "something here for everyone" (it says here). Of course, the 'something for everyone' maxim is a double-edged sword – it shows the breadth of bands lumped loosely into this so-called movement, but leads inevitably to the inclusion of some duff tunes that fail to satisfy and a whole bunch of stuff sitting somewhere in the middle.

Disc one has a strong start with *Do Or Die* from guitarist Sophie Lloyd and Inglorious vocalist Nathan James, which makes more sense than Massive Wagons moaning about their career struggles on *Tokyo* that opens *Volume 1*. The Treatment (*Wrong Way*), Wayward Sons (*Joke's On You*), Trucker Diablo (*Dig*), Brave Rival (*Run And Hide*), The Karma Effect (*Mercy*) and Robert Jon & The Wreck (*She's A Fighter*) distinguish themselves by

writing tunes buzzing with energy and memorable melodies.

The good vibes continue on disc two with Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners' nod to The Georgia Satellites on *Wasted Times*. Disc two is possibly stronger than disc one, with highlights including Virginmarys (*Devil Keeps Coming*), Inglorious (*She Won't Let You Go*), Kira Mac (*Mississippi Swinging*), When Rivers Meet (*He'll Drive You Crazy*), the Outlaw Orchestra (*Chicken Fried Snake*) – presumably filling the country-rocking comedy spot taken by Bootyard Bandits on *Volume 1* – the Soundgarden-esque King Herd (*Halo*), Laurence Jones (*Anywhere With Me*) and Oli Brown & The Dead Collective (*Everything You Want*), who make this classic rock thing sound so fun and easy.

Inevitable there will be outliers, and these include prog band Ethyrfield (*Remembering*), Black Lakes (*Verity In Flames*), whose metalcore breakdowns make them sound like they've wandered onto the wrong compilation, and Verity White (*Road To Nowhere*) with her synths and idiosyncratic vocals.

Overall there's probably enough good stuff here for a killer single disc, but the real fun in comps like this is in discovering just who might be your new favourite band in the future.



Essi Berelian

Twin Temple

God Is Dead MRI

Satanic doo-wop duo's second lacks devilish charm



It's not a bad USP, to be fair: rock'n'roll-flavoured doo-wop vowing to

reclaim Satanism from heavy metal. But can such rehashed R&B still possess the listener?

On *God Is Dead*, tracks such as *Burn Your Bible* and *Let's Have A Satanic Orgy* are Spector-style soul tunes reproduced with loving attention to reverb-drenched detail, even if they're dedicated to desecration rather than to innocent teenage heartbreak. Sentiments such as *Be A Slut (Do What You Want)* are also likeably provocative, but they lack the (black) magic ingredient: strong enough tunes to make the lyrics stick in the memory. Ignore the words and you could be listening to lacklustre Shangri-La's out-takes. And no one's going to sell their soul for that any time soon.



Johnny Sharp

Taking Back Sunday

152 FANTASY

Long Island emo kids grow up beautifully on album eight.



The US East Coast emo scene of the early 2000s was fascinating

because no one seemed to be in charge. Hordes of suburban kids were forming bands in parents' basements, falling in love, falling out with friends and bandmates, and airing all of that dirty adolescent laundry in public on their subsequent albums.

Taking Back Sunday, one of the genre's long-standing success stories, who've never been short on internal band politics themselves, are growing older with admirable grace on this, their first album in seven years. The passage of time is apparently on their mind as they take a look at the acceptance of ageing while retaining a youthful lust for life on *Sold*, and on *Quit Trying* frontman Adam Lazzara takes a deep dive into his evolution as a person.

While there's plenty of the old finger-jabbing drama, emo anthems and stage-ready energy that long-time fans cherish, there's a more slow-burning, elegant, grown-up classic rock approach to much here that could easily see Taking Back

Sunday finding a whole new audience after all this time.



Emma Johnston

Mondo Generator

We Stand Against You

HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Nick Oliveri takes on the world.



You don't so much listen to a Mondo Generator album as feel it

– and you'll be feeling album number seven long after the dying notes of raging closer *For A Day* have faded to nothing.

Frontman Nick Oliveri says this is their heaviest album to date, and that's saying something, because the previous six weren't exactly lightweight. This 20 minutes or so of abrasive riffing and migraine screaming is like sticking your head in the devil's own cement mixer.

Oliveri is not happy, although it's not easy to tell what's pissing him off in *Rubber Room*, *Unglued* and *I Want Out* – the pandemic, personal stuff, death, take your pick – as he wails and screeches like a rabid grizzly bear over Mike Pygmy's guitar violence.

WSAY is pure fury distilled, nine hateful jabs to the throat, and a fistful of Molotov cocktails as a fuck-you chaser.



Essi Berelian

Chris Shiflett

Lost At Sea SNAKEFARM

Foo Fighters guitarist finds country roads to take him home.



Chris Shiflett has always combined being a Foo Fighter with assorted

side projects. Recorded in Nashville with Cadillac Three leader Jaren Johnston (who's written for Steven Tyler and Meat Loaf as well as country giants Keith Urban and Tim McGraw), his incessantly upbeat third solo album is a romp. It blends an ever-present country twang with a barroom honk, some appealingly plaintive vocals, and a barrage of sizzling guitar, especially on *Black Top White Lines*, which almost breaks into Fleetwood Mac's *Oh Well*. There are hints of Americana, a diversion into near-reggae on *Damage Control* and, on *Parties*, turbo-charged pop-punk.

In a sense it's the perfect extra-curricular activity: worthy in its own right, but non-threatening.

Since none of the 10 brisk songs would be right for Foo Fighters, there's no comparison to be made, while Shiflett has explored avenues that might be denied him as a stadium rocker. Win-win, then.



John Aizlewood

Various

The Jeffrey Lee Pierce Sessions Project – The Task Has Overwhelmed Us

GUTTERHOUSE

Project 10 years in making featuring Dave Gahan, Nick Cave and more.

This is the fourth volume in a series conceived in 2006 by the late Gun Club guitarist Cypress Grove, honouring the memory of Jeffrey Lee Pierce by inviting guest artists to rework his material, not all of it completed. This collection shows the reach of Pierce, thematically and materially, with contributors ranging from Deborah Harry, in a straightforwardly affecting duet with Nick Cave, to rapper Dynamax Roberts, featured on the Def Jam metal-style track *Bad America*.

Highlights include Dave Gahan embarking empathetically on a 'river of sadness' on *Mother Of Earth*, and Suzie Shapiro's tremulous, spectral *Secret Fires*. It's poignant that two of the guest artists have passed away themselves, adding to the shadow of death cast across this collection: Mark Lanegan, who delivers a country-noir take on *Go Tell The Mountain*, and Mark Stewart, whose *Vodou* is typically jagged, impassioned, teetering.



David Stubbs

Glen Hansard

All That Was East

Is West Of Me Now ANTI

Extra volume and intensity from Irish troubadour.



The new Glen Hansard record begins with overloaded guitar and soon

arrives at a great squalling chorus. *The Feast Of St. John* sounds like Neil Young and is a reminder of Hansard's love for the late Jason Molina.

It's four years since Hansard's previous album, *This Wild Willing*, which was broody and inward-facing. He has explored many musical approaches since his folk-grunge combination with The Frames in 1990, and it's great to hear him in noisy

surrounds again, even inviting Warren Ellis from the Bad Seeds to raise the intensity on that opening track. The mood varies across the record: strident on *Bearing Witness*, intimate like Leonard Cohen on *Sure As The Rain*. There's an fiery tribute to his fallen comrade Mic Christopher on *Short Life*, which connects Hansard's award-winning career to his busking origins in Dublin.



Stuart Bailie

Trevor Rabin

Rio INSIDEOUT MUSIC

A no-no from the ex-Yes man.



Trevor Rabin reinvented Yes when he joined as guitarist in 1983 and wrote

their smash hit *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*, and his stamp was all over Yes's 90125 album released that same year. The South African multi-instrumentalist had not previously been known for his prog tendencies, but what the hell – he stayed with Yes for more than a decade.

Rio, Rabin's first solo album of vocal material in 34 years, is hugely accomplished but too convoluted by half. To make an incongruous Ian Dury reference, this is less *Cleaver Trever*, more clever-clever Trevor. Opener *Big Mistakes* has a Mellencamp flavour, and *Paradise* is at its heart a good ol' blue-collar stomper, but before long the self-indulgent spectre of *Olias Of Sunhollow* looms large and everything goes pear-shaped.

The best moments are *Goodbye* (an ELO-style hoedown) and *These Tears* (a despairing ballad that could've been recorded by 10cc).

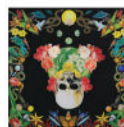


Geoff Barton

Hippie Death Cult

Helichrysum HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Proto-metal for the post-modern world.



If ever a band lived up to their name, Portland's Hippie Death Cult are it. They

sound exactly like that, like a strung-out weekend at the Spahn Ranch under an unforgiving sun, one day bleeding into another in a rolling orgy of chemicals and fuzz pedals.

This is their first album since the band thinned down to a power trio, with bassist Laura Phillips taking over vocals. She

has a powerful, melodious roar, reminiscent of Purson's Rosalie Cunningham. It is a worthy complement to Eddie Brnabic's frequently startling guitar work, which slips effortlessly from proto-metal crunch to head-spinning Helios Creed-esque space-rock freakouts. Opener *Arise* is all chunky riffs and headbanging propulsion, and *Toxic Annihilator* sounds like a speed-freaked Black Sabbath, but the bulk of the album delivers easy tempos and woozy, underwater atmospheres. It's tasty heavy-mellow, from the kaleidoscopic ballad *Better Days* to the organ-driven acid-rock *Nefelibata*.

Helichrysum is perfect for melting into your couch of woe while the world burns all around you. Prime heavy psychedelia with just enough downer-rock vibes to satisfy the occult rockers among us.



Sleazegrinder

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

The Silver Cord KGLW

A sharp left turn onto the dancefloor. Sorted!



If King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard startle only by the sheer number

of their records, then be prepared for something completely unexpected.

After tackling psychedelia, thrash metal, folk-rock, garage nuggets and prog among many other styles and genres, the Australian sextet twiddle the knobs for a journey into electronic music. And, in keeping with its protagonists' track record of simultaneous releases, the album comes in extended and standard versions. The former wins out as the band stretch out to explore the possibilities of the studio. Twenty-minute opener *Thela* sets the pace and tone with an excursion that takes nods from the German pioneers of the 70s including Kraftwerk and Harmonia. Elsewhere, King Gizzard swerve to deliver pumping trance with *Swan Song* and the beepin' and bleepin' dance monster that is *Set*.

Devoid of cynicism or sarcasm, *The Silver Cord – Extended Mix* revels in the sheer euphoria of unshamed hedonism. Rave on!



Julian Marszalek

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Teen Jesus And The Jean Teasers

I Love You DOMESTIC LA LA

A debut characterised by engaging fast-paced brevity and a sharp, easy charm, *I Love You* is no-nonsense, Australian-diphthonged double-X-chromosomed pop-punk effortlessly sold by barbed lyrical hooks and subconscious-grabbing ear worms. Ripper. **8/10**

Stepmother

Planet Brutalicon TEE PEE

An appropriately titled act of untrammelled sonic savagery from an Aussie power trio fronted by Witch's Graham Clise. It's a bit Damned, a bit early Misfits, but mostly the sort of thing that'll cause you to break the furniture. Or a leg. *Scream For Death's* a lovely tune. **8/10**

Nova Doll

Denaturing BLACK THRONE/TARANTULA

How bleak can Barrie, Ontario be? Every magma-paced stoner assault on this debut from Heavy Petter/Angry Spells guitarist/vocalist Casey Cuff's solo project is about death. Even *California Sunshine*. Leaden Kyuss doom, slothful subsonic fuzz. Catnip for cataleptics. **6/10**

Cherry Glazerr

I Don't Want You Anymore SECRETLY CANADIAN

The latest incarnation of former 15-year old LA lo-fi indie prodigy Clementine Creevy's CG encapsulates shoegaze, garage, grunge, self-analytical Gen Z catharsis and off-the-leash, anything-goes, fourth-album-itch experimentation, yet still retains its key pop core. **7/10**

Des Rocs

Dream Machine SUMERIAN

NYC electro-rockers Des Rocs, aka Danny Rocco, charismatic prime exponent of the self-invented 'bedroom arena rock' genre has stumbled upon the missing link between QOTSA and killer Queen. Sizzling, glam-laced, ear-worm-infested, irresistible, big-bollocks brilliance. **9/10**

Molly Karloff

Breaking Out MOLLY MAKES

Three-piece, Oxford-based Brit-rockers Molly Karloff combine a punchy QOTSA-attuned commercial ear with a honed-to-the-bone brutality. An unvarnished, overdub-averse what-you-get-live production from Mike (Sabbath/Priest) Exeter only accentuates huge potential. **8/10**

Slow Pulp

Yard ANTI-

Kicking off with the down-tempo contemplations of *Gone 2* tends to undersell this Emily Massey-led, Chicago-based, Wisconsin-raised indie quartet. There's way more Breeders-reminiscent 90s alt. meat on the bones with the likes of punchy recent single *Cramps*. **7/10**

The Holy Ghost

Ignore Alien Orders LOVELY

Stern and gritty, Hüsker Dü-styled blue-collar indie born of a Stockholm lockdown, *Ignore Alien Orders* is textbook brow-furrowing issue-driven alt.rock. If Nirvana had stuck to this sort of thing then Kurt Cobain might still be with us. Happy, but penniless in the back of a van. **7/10**

'68

Yes, And... PURE NOISE

There may be only two of them, but the drama and dynamics that these Atlanta, Georgians pack into their every densely power packed ejaculation, produced – by Nick (Foos/Rush) Raskulnec – to the brink of lethality, is consistently stunning. You may suffer a nosebleed. **8/10**

Melody Fields

1901 COOP/NUDIE

Gloriously evocative of driving to Spike Island in a choking fug of THC's with a microdot on your tongue and *Tomorrow Never Knows* on your sub-woofer. Baggied melon-twist psych in a maximal Spiritualised style from Gothenburg, Sweden. Next month? Episode two (1991). **8/10**

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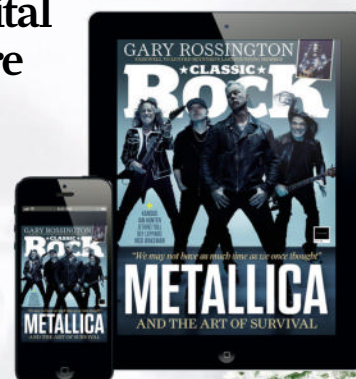
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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



The Darkness

Permission To Land... Again WARNER MUSIC

20th-anniversary reissue of Lowestoft rockers' debut, including unreleased tracks.



It's hard to imagine now, with The Darkness long-since clasped to the nation's collective bosom, that anyone could forget frontman Justin Hawkins's appearance as Chameleon on *The Masked Singer*. But back in 2003 there was still a degree of critical scepticism about a band whose combination of hard-rock riffs and falsetto vocals seemed clearly tongue-in-cheek.

This typically OTT reissue (formats include five vinyl and four CD/DVD variants) of their 2003 debut album is a timely reminder of how necessary they were, not least as a light-hearted counterpoint to the po-faced Detroit garage scene prevalent at the time.

The stats speak for themselves: a global hit, *Permission To Land* scooped up three Brit awards and an Ivor Novello, went five times platinum, and sold 1.5 million copies in the UK alone.

Twenty years on, the album has attained a classic feel, with gonzo ear worms *Growing On Me*, *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* and *Love Is Only A Feeling* ripping from the speakers like jukebox perennials worthy of selection alongside Thin Lizzy and AC/DC. And while the debt to past greats sometimes seems a little too obvious – for example the riff to *Get Your Hands Off My Woman* is a complete lift of

Urge Overkill's *Sister Havana* – sheer force of personality ensures that they never feel second-hand, the contrast between Hawkins's histrionic delivery and self-effacing lyrics offering a brilliant deconstruction of the macho-metal stereotype, not least on lovelorn schooldays reminiscence *Friday Night*, in which he warbles: 'God the way she moves me, to write bad poetry.'

Fans of the original will gorge on this reissue's extras, which include B-sides, and choice cuts from incendiary live shows from the period at London's Astoria, Knebworth (both 2003) and Wembley Arena (2004), the latter including a raucous version of *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End)*. But it's the six previously unreleased demos which are the most intriguing. A paint-stripping *Black Shuck* finds Hawkins at his larynx-shredding best, while *Love On The Rocks With No Ice* exudes the swaggering confidence of a band about to claim their place at pop's top table. Proof that their creative juices were in full flow comes with scorching versions of *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us* and *Live Til I Die* – eventually released to promote 2012's *Hot Cakes* and 2019's *Easter Is Cancelled*.

Permission granted. Again.



Paul Moody

Van Halen

The Collection II RHINO

Goodbye Sam.



It wasn't all about David Lee Roth, y'know. With Sammy Hagar

as frontman, the 'Van Hagar' incarnation of Van Halen eclipsed the 1974-85 DLR era in terms of sales. *The Collection II* covers the four consecutive US No.1 albums released during Sammy Hagar's initial tenure with the band: *5150* (1986), *OU812* (1988), *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* (1991) and *Balance* (1995). A fifth disc offers a collection of studio rarities.

And yet it was all about Roth, really, wasn't it? Van Halen's first five albums with Diamond Dave had a swaggering pizzazz; these days this stuff with Hagar sounds a bit... meh. A bit corporate. A bit rock-by-numbers. A bit... uneventful.

Apart from *Why Can't This Be Love?*, the keyboard-dominated mega-hit from *5150*, it's hard to name many other truly memorable songs this version of VH recorded. Seven of F.U.C.K.'s 11 tracks were released as singles, but – and here's a challenge for ya – apart from *Poundcake*, can you name any others? *Seventh Seal* (*Balance*'s opener) is a fabulous, almost mystical, Eddie Van Halen showboat, and Hagar, for once, is not on are-you-ready-to-rock autopilot. But throughout, eruptions in one's pants are at a noticeable premium.



Geoff Barton

The Orb & David Gilmour

Metallic Spheres In Colour

SONY LEGACY

Psychonauts' 2010 collaboration remixed.



The Orb's Alex Patterson made the connection between dub's low end, the

luxuriance of ambient music and the cosmic expansiveness of space-rock long ago. Binding these threads together, The Orb really had less to do with the dance music of the early 90s and more with the elongated suites of Klaus Schulze's pioneering mid-70s electronic material, and elements of the Black Ark's output. With that in mind, the only surprising thing about his collaboration with Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour on

2010's *Metallic Spheres* was that it took so long to happen.

Metallic Spheres In Colour finds those first sessions remixed by producer and Killing Joke bassist Youth, and in doing so he's effectively fashioned a new album that goes further than the original. Ramping up The Orb's deep throb, beats and synth washes, the resulting two elongated tracks – *Seamless Solar Spheres Of Affection Mix* and *Seamlessly Martian Spheres Of Reflection Mix* – feel even more like an alliance between Patterson and Gilmour, with both parties complementing each other. The blend creates a wholly new entity that stands apart from its predecessor while making huge improvements on it. Moreover, it raises the tantalising prospect of another album.



Julian Marszalek

David Bowie

Pin Ups PARLOPHONE

The runt of Bowie's 70s litter? Yes but no.



David Bowie's 70s were so jaw dropping, that his covers album *Pin Ups*

is easily dismissed. When it was released 50 years ago, six months after *Aladdin Sane* and seven before *Diamond Dogs*, Bowie was so prolific that it wasn't even the time-buying exercise that covers albums tend to be. Instead, as this half-speed mastered vinyl edition shows, it was a full stop: his last Ken Scott production and, with drummer Woody Woodmansey already departed, the last gasp of the Spiders From Mars.

Instead, a homage to the British bands (and Australia's Easybeats) that initially fuelled Bowie. His own music would rarely go down these roads again (almost another full stop), but the vocal arrangements on *Sorrow* were wondrous, he hurtled through *Them's Here Comes The Night* like a man possessed, and his version of *Shapes Of Things* was splendidly over the top.



John Aizlewood

Bonnie Tyler

Faster Than The Speed

Of Night SONY

When Tyler met Steinman. With her raspy voice and shaggy blonde 'do, Welsh singer Bonnie Tyler was hailed as the female Rod Stewart when her two mid-

70s singles *Lost in France* and *It's A Heartache* made the UK Top 10. But there were then long lean years before she hit the big time again, in 1983 with her fifth album *Faster Than The Speed Of Night*, produced by Jim Steinman, the Spector-inspired genius behind Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell*.

Bonnie, like Meat, could really belt out a tune, and she gave everything she had on *Total Eclipse Of The Heart*, a typically OTT Steinman number, a No.1 smash on both sides of the Atlantic and one of the quintessential 80s power ballads. Elsewhere on an album focused on the rock market, she covered songs by Creedence Clearwater Revival, Blue Öyster Cult and Bryan Adams, backed by a stellar cast including members of Springsteen's E Street Band and guitar hero Rick Derringer. There's also a lovely duet with the great Scottish singer Frankie Miller on his ballad *Tears*, two gritty voices in perfect harmony.

With this vinyl reissue there are no extras. It's just the original record, with Tyler in all her big-haired glory.

★★★★★
Paul Elliott

Steve Miller

J50: The Evolution Of The Joker SAILOR/CAPITOL/UME

The Gangster of Love goes deep diving.



Something of a master class in how to write a hit song – and *The Joker* was

a big one, five times platinum – comes with illuminating spoken commentaries from Miller, and contemporary live acoustic goodies like *Dear Mary* and *Nothing Lasts*, from his great album *Recall The Beginning...* *A Journey From Eden*. Spread over three LPs, it's inevitably one for the fans, but a whole side dedicated to the evolution of *Shu Ba Da Du Ma Ma Ma Ma* might not be overly captivating for everyone, even if it emphasises Miller's dedication to his craft. Mixed in with the Capitol studio punishment, you get up close and personal items like a hotel four-track demo of *I Don't Mind*, a twanged-up *Lidi* and an a-capella *Couple De Ville* before you get to the hooked frenzy of yer actual *Joker*.

Sure, it is verging on self-indulgent, but Miller is generous enough to provide a glimpse behind the mask, and it's

certainly a novel way to unravel the artistic process – and proof that Miller was more than a few novelty numbers and some heritage hippie classics. He always was a Space Cowboy, never a space cadet.

★★★★★
Max Bell

Dio

The Studio Albums

1996-2004 BMG/NUI

The wilderness years.



Ronnie Dio helped make so much great music in the 70s and 80s as singer with Rainbow and Black Sabbath and then as boss of the band he named simply Dio. In this new box set, however, there is thin gruel – the last knockings of Dio, begun with what is surely the worst album of Ronnie's entire career.

Angry Machines was released in 1996, in the wake of grunge and with nu metal on the rise. Boldly, but unwisely, Ronnie attempted to move with the times, delivering a dark and largely tuneless album.

From that nadir he bounced back in 2000 with the concept album *Magica*, on which he

reunited with bassist Jimmy Bain, guitarist Craig Goldy and drummer Simon Wright, and returned to the classic Dio sound. It is by far the best of these late-period albums.

Killing The Dragon (2002) had some solid material, enlivened by the shredding of guitarist Doug Aldrich, and *Master Of The Moon* two years later, with Goldy reinstated, was similarly robust.

As it turned out, *Master Of The Moon* was the band's swan song, but not Ronnie's. His last years with Heaven & Hell – Black Sabbath in all but name – were triumphant.

★★★★★
Paul Elliott

Iggy Pop

Rare Trax CLEOPATRA

Forgotten boy's forgotten tracks.

When it comes to the alternative mix, the rare track, the previously unreleased gem, few artists have a back catalogue quite so peppered with off-piste gems as Iggy Pop.

Since the messy post-Mainman demise of The Stooges coincided with their lead vocalist being embraced by the nascent punk scene as its blood-spattered godfather

and various incarnations of material that might have constituted *Raw Power's* successor made their way to market via often questionable means, Iggy's haphazardly distributed first drafts have only served to accentuate his reputation as an unimpeachable outsider. There are, therefore, a fair few after-the-fact Iggy releases that you might be well-advised to avoid, but this isn't one of them.

It kicks off with a quartet of alternatively mixed selections from *The Idiot* ('77) that are rougher, rawer, less defined by a Berlin Bowie sheen, but boasting a reliable fidelity you'd never simply dismiss as 'bootleg'. Four from 1981's *Party Sessions* follow, perky 'live' mixes of *Lust For Life* and *The Passenger*, four demos recorded with ex-Pistol Steve Jones (including a barely identifiable assault on Hendrix's *Purple Haze*), and a 1985 version of Sly Stone's *Family Affair*. Concluding with further oddments – Ministry's *Fire Engine* mix, *I Wanna Be Your Dog* (*Brains Mix*) – *Rare Trax* is an enjoyably slapdash Pop-pourri that existing fans will only relish.

★★★★★
Ian Fortnam



King Crimson

Lark's Tongue In Aspic PANEGYRIC

Complete recording sessions plus 2023 remixes for the album's 50th anniversary.

In July 1972, King Crimson went through another of their metamorphoses. With guitarist Robert Fripp, as ever, at the dark core, the constant, Yes drummer Bill Bruford joined, as did Family's John Wetton on bass and vocals, David Cross on violin and viola and Jamie Muir on sundry instruments. Having road-tested new material over several months, *Lark's Tongue In Aspic* was released in 1973.

This new edition, featuring stereo and surround-sound mixes by David Singleton and Steven Wilson, as well as instrumental versions and multiple takes of each track, brings out all facets of an album that in its segmentation and classical aspirations is undoubtedly prog, but is fiercely compact for all that. It is truly unpicked, unpacked here.

The instrumental title track, in two parts, commences with a faintly Gamelan percussive swirl, before Fripp's guitar strikes up, dense and earnestly conversational, cutting over Cross's choppy strings, before lapsing into near-silence. The second part sees Fripp up the intensity, as if trying to drill to the dark heart of the matter;

around this time he was hitting new depths with Brian Eno on *No Pussyfooting* and *Blank Frank*.

The remaining tracks are shorter but not dwarfed by the title track. *Book Of Saturday* is deceptively slight, but Fripp's playing, including a weaving backwards solo, is never less than impeccable, and his exchanges with Cross's strings unassumingly brief but exquisite, certainly not outstaying its welcome (as was sometimes prog's wont). *Exiles* sees Cross to the fore once more, but not in some spurious imitation of a string quartet. His playing is freer and more interestingly textured than that.

Easy Money, with its Mellotrons and abstract reverb feels uncannily like a close relative of Pink Floyd's *Money*, released the same year, especially in the mix of Wetton's vocals. Fripp's soloing is again searing and searching, with a *Machine Gun*-like rat-a-at, concluding with a *Laughing Policeman*-style cackle to underscore the sardonic



lyric. On *The Talking Drum*, which feels ominously like it's going to be an extended solo, the percussion thankfully recedes into the background, supplementing the velocity of the bass.

A prog milestone, and worthy of the full reissue treatment.

★★★★★
David Stubbs



Green Day

Dookie REPRISE

Completist 30th-anniversary edition includes live sets, demos, out-takes and merch.



Full three decades ago, as grunge foundered ahead of its post-phase, Southern Californian punk rock was waiting in the wings, having long evolved from its dead end of early-80s hardcore. The US national underground punk scene was rife with quality musicianship, but exposure was stifled by scene zealots obsessed with the cardinal sin of 'selling out' – signing to a major label. Those scene arbiters' passion for a positive and fertile milieu was compromised by their downright hostility to anyone stepping outside of their community.

Two albums in, Green Day left behind the pastoral cottage industry of Lookout! Records for Reprise with the release of *Dookie*. Their signing to a major label founded by Frank Sinatra and owned by Warners was seen by the independent underground punk scene as the ultimate betrayal. But for Green Day, that acrimonious divorce from the scene they helped feed and celebrate was a catalyst that determined the antagonism of *Dookie* – as well as the band for years to come. Hence naming their major-label debut after a word meaning 'dogshit'.

The Rob Cavallo-produced album is almost a Green Day sampler of sorts; the sarcastic derision of signature song *Welcome To Paradise* appears for the second

time following a rawer version on previous album *Kerplunk*. With one foot still in the past, lead-off single *Longview* and *When I Come Around* are tunes that could be mastered by eager pre-teens. But it was irrepressibly infectious second single *Basket Case* that gripped a generation who missed out on The Undertones, Buzzcocks and Stiff Little Fingers. The musical simplicity and Billie Joe Armstrong's caustic vocal jeer would launch a tidal wave of copycat bands – Blink-182, Paramore, My Chemical Romance et al.

Thematically, *Dookie* is *The Catcher In The Rye* set to music. Its familiar adolescent motifs of sexual confusion, depression and anxiety – but paradoxically shot through with the stimulus of Californian sunshine – quickly superseded the bleak Pacific Northwest-derived grunge and first-gen punk revivalism with its redolence of 70s UK urban decay. In fact, Southern California pop-punk had less in common with the Pistols than with ABBA. *Dookie's* musical rite of passage would mean – much like *Low*, *Unknown Pleasures*, *Meat Is Murder* or *Nevermind* – that successive generations navigating the Sturm und Drang of teenagerdom would discover it, accounting for its eventual sales of more than 20 million.

■■■■■■■■■
Alex Burrows

Steely Dan

Aja GEFEN/UJME

New, audiophile edition of jazz-rock pinnacle.



The delivery of *Aja* in 1977 was a triumph of Steely Dan's studio

progression. Donald Fagen and Walter Becker retired the touring band, leaving a minor part for guitarist and co-founder Denny Dias. Instead they dialled up scores of brilliant session players and jobbing jazz figures. Everything was layered, scrubbed and obsessively tended, yet miraculously it sounded great. A song like *Peg* may have been filtered through the work of seven in-demand guitarists, but the mood is fresh and the humour wins. *Deacon Blues*, a study of mid-life disappointment and the yearning for a more creative flight path, is destined to mooch around popular culture for ever. The lyrics are a perfect combination of soul and snark. *Black Cow* makes light of male insecurity, and *Josie* revs the motorcycle engines for a badass return. There are many displays of class throughout, such as Wayne Shorter's sax playing on the title track and the astounding shuffle rhythms of drummer Bernard Purdie.

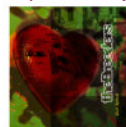
On album six Steely Dan were at their best. Follow-up *Gaucho* has its fans, but it is tainted by cynicism and the heart was diminished. *Aja* was singular jazz-rock and sonic ambition. No doubt this audiophile edition will find eager collectors.

■■■■■■■■■
Stuart Baillie

The Breeders

Last Splash (30th Anniversary Original Analog Edition) 4AD

Anthem-packed alt.rock sister act classic returns in slightly expanded vinyl repackaging.



Never mind all those tiresomely self-serious, greasy-haired grunge

blokes, The Breeders captured the liberating punk-pop euphoria of early-90s US alt.rock with much more charm, charisma and humour on their platinum-selling second album. Rooted in the volatile sibling chemistry and perfectly imperfect intertwined voices of Kim and Kelley Deal, a band that began as a Pixies side project made one of the decade's defining albums.

Thirty years later, *Last Splash* remains a near-flawless, sonically rich feast of swoony girl-group harmonies, revved-up super-fuzz guitars, winking Led Zeppelin homages and deliciously sarcastic lyrics ('If you're so special, why aren't you dead?'). Unassailable anthems *Cannonball* and *Divine Hammer* sit alongside gloriously weird, woozy heart-twangers like *No Aloha* and an aching tender, country-adjacent cover of *Drivin' On 9*, a song by tragedy-stricken Boston alt.folk band Ed's Redeeming Qualities.

With a deluxe 20th-anniversary box set already available, this slightly expanded vinyl reissue seems fairly superfluous, but the two previous unreleased tracks are both excellent. Co-written with Pixies frontman Black Francis, the gorgeous, spiralling, shuddering power-waltz *Go Man Go* has apparently been buried for decades, which seems perverse. *Divine Mascis*, a reworking of *Divine Hammer* featuring comically sloppy, whiney, Emo Philips vocals by J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr, is goofy but fun.

■■■■■■■■■
Stephen Dalton

Susan Tedeschi

Just Won't Burn FANTASY

Her breakthrough album, 25 years on.



In the age of the deluxe, overstuffed box set, it's a little strange to have

an album's 25th-anniversary edition that isn't heavy on unnecessary paraphernalia and studio tracks not deemed worthy of inclusion first time round, but the five unreleased tracks here are worth the entrance fee.

The original album still stands up, with the slower songs – the ones that allow Tedeschi's extraordinary voice to sail and soar – having weathered best. So the sublime version of John Prine's *Angel Of Montgomery* tucked away towards the end of the record feels much weightier than the opening, Creedence-ish chug of *Rock Me Right*, and the hazy, meandering title track makes the following rattle through *Mama, He Treats Your Daughter Mean* feel rather slight. Guitarist Sean Costello shines throughout, with a twinkling solo on *You Need To Be With Me* an early highlight.

Of the previously unreleased

songs, *Voodoo Woman* is a solid blues, while the woozy *Waste Of Time* should have made the original track-list. Best of the extras are the stretched out and blissful versions of the title track and *Looking For Answers*, recorded by the Tedeschi Trucks Band at their spiritual home of New York's Beacon Theatre.



Fraser Lewry

Tom Waits

Reissues ISLAND/UMC

Challenging early-90s works join reissue campaign.



After a transformative 1980s in which he evolved from bluesy boozy barfly with a polarising voice to incomparable sound sculptor with a really polarising voice, Tom Waits, finally on maps that existed outside his own head, decided the 90s were not, for him, about safe bets.

Recorded in an echoey cellar, 1992's *Bone Machine* (7/10) was even more obsessively percussive and perversely Beefheartian than its forerunners. It was also, because his vision was true, cohesive, unlike some of his more scatter-gun albums. Fixated on the inevitable decay of the human body, over unnerving rhythms Waits (aged 43) growls about primal fears and poetic death wishes. Almost as a mercy, the album lightens up at the end, and the Keith Richards cameo on *That Feel* is no more bizarrely incongruous than any other Waits whim.

His run-up to such dark terrain had been writing songs for Robert Wilson's production of the play *The Black Rider*, co-written by William S Burroughs. The accompanying album (5/10) emerged in '93, and although flashes like *Just The Right Bullets* and *I'll Shoot The Moon* catch a palatable waft of doomed romance, it leaps about manically and a credible world, even if nightmarish, is not built. It nuzzles self-parody.

Chris Roberts

Various

Produced By Tony Visconti EDEL/DEMON

Fifty years of sprinkling fairy dust over pop legends.



Producer Tony Visconti fully deserves this spotlight being shone on his

favourite works, even if 77 of them, spread across this four-CD/six-vinyl collection only scratch the surface.

Mark Paytress has coaxed a lifetime of stories out of Visconti for the 78-page booklet's track-by-track. Visconti also writes a modest foreword in which he salutes his mentor Denny Cordell. Visconti was alongside Cordell as mixing engineer on Joe Cocker's Beatles cover *With A Little Help From My Friends* (included here), before setting out on his own to produce the debut by Tyrannosaurus Rex, and a year later Bowie's *Space Oddity* album. He produced 10 studio albums for Marc Bolan and 11 for Bowie, so, fittingly, those two artists dominate with four songs by each here, including the former's 1971 classic *Hot Love*, and *I Would Be Your Slave* from the latter's magnificent *Blackstar* made almost half a century later.

Elsewhere, Visconti conjures bizarre segues, not least Gentle Giant followed by Difford & Tilbrook. And while only he could love all 77 of these tracks, each is weirdly special. Be they by U2, Sparks or Adam Ant, everything here shines. The secret is the song. Faced with Thin Lizzy's *Bad Reputation* album, one song stood out – *Dancing In The Moonlight* – so Visconti polished it.



Neil Jeffries

XTC

The Big Express APE HOUSE

One for the steam trainspotters.



The initial rush of post-punk euphoria and XTC's glorious run of hit singles had, by 1984, exhausted both the band and the charts. XTC ceased touring in 1982 to salvage songwriter and frontman Andy Partridge's health. Meanwhile, the disco-pop takeover was in full swing, rock was slithering into its hairspray phase, so what better time to release a clattering industrial pop album about Swindon's railway works?

The Big Express is as complicated and clever as XTC's other records, artfully framing both the personal and the political. *This World Over*, the strongest song on side one, describes the aftermath of a nuclear attack on London. It isn't until side two's opener *The Everyday Story Of Smalltown*

that the album shakes off a depression and sparks into life. *Reign Of Blows*, about political cruelty, is almost Stoness, while *I Remember The Sun* evokes memories of childhood summers.

The record's peculiar combination of 80s synths, drum programming, 60s phasing and Mellotron is newly mastered by Jason Mitchell on 200-gram vinyl.

For all but the most devoted XTC fans, *The Big Express* is more of a curiosity than a classic. Next stop, The Dukes Of Stratosphear.

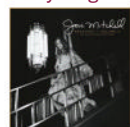


Claudia Elliott

Joni Mitchell Archives, Vol. 3: The Asylum Years (1972-1975)

Joni Mitchell WARNER

There's Joni and then there's everything else.



Joni Mitchell's 1971 album *Blue* will for ever stand as the untouchable apogee of the singer-songwriter genre, a thing of delicate beauty that is also, somehow, as strong as steel. But for some of us, Mitchell got even better with the run of albums from 1974's *Court And Spark* – a sizable hit record – through the following year's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* to *Hejira* in 1976.

Joni Mitchell Archives, Vol. 3: The Asylum Years (1972-1975), the third in an essential series, concentrates on the first two albums in that immortal trilogy, as well as 1972's nearly as marvellous *For The Roses*. It is an embarrassment of riches, not least the variety of exceptional live material, both solo and in the company of Tom Scott and L.A. Express, adding to what was previously released as *Miles Of Aisles*.

What will really have jaws hitting the floor, however, is being privy to the development of masterpieces like *Don't Interrupt The Sorrow* or *People's Parties* from early demos through to studio works-in-progress. It enables devotees to see how she got where she was going, following a path that was hers and hers alone.

It's really only Bob Dylan or Leonard Cohen who are fit to be mentioned in the same breath as Mitchell, and even their inclusion is debatable.

Genius.



Pat Carty

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

The Folk Implosion

Music For Kids DOMINO

Lou Barlow and John Davis's perfectly pitched soundtrack to Harmony Korine/Larry Clark's summer of '95 indie zeitgeist-shaker returns – sounding utterly splendid – across two vinyls, bolstered with UNKLE and Dust Brothers remixes. A slacktastic, Sebadoh-y lost gem. 7/10

Jackson C Frank

My Name Is Carnival MOONCREST

When it comes to a hard-luck life, that Jackson's went 'furnace explosion-schizophrenia-depression-blinding-death' probably says enough. He was also a handy singer-songwriter active on the 60s UK folk scene, produced by Paul Simon, and these are his best bits. 7/10

Stackridge

Mr Mick (Expanded) CHERRY RED

I want to like Stackridge. On another planet they could be Cheap Trick, XTC even. They've got the chops, but are cursed with an innate wackiness. *Dora...*, *The Stanley*, and what's this now? A reggae version of The Beatles' *Hold Me Tight*? The Goons? In '76? No, stop it. 6/10

Godfathers

Alpha Beta Gamma Delta Plus

Doubled in size over two CDs by a welcome expansion, Peter Coyne's rejuvenated five-piece 'Fathers' '22 *ABGD* now features extra tracks, acoustic versions, Rockpalast live selections and a predictably fiery punk'n'roll romp through The Stooges' *I Wanna Be Your Dog*. 8/10

Dinosaur Jr

Where You Been? CHERRY RED

Reminiscent of Neil Young's more haphazard Crazy Horse moments, Dinosaur Jr's second major-label album was unusual for the fact that it was recorded by an actual band; J. Mascis normally elected to play all the instruments himself. And this one was the hit. Go figure. 7/10

Keith Emerson

Variations Box Set SPIRIT OF UNICORN

This 10-CD delve into the keyboard virtuoso's back catalogue begins with a cursory disc of 'hits' (Nice/ELP), followed by four further 'volumes' of solo works, soundtracks, collaborations and lives. Extensive, lovingly compiled, but aimed squarely at the deep-pocketed completist. 6/10

Goo Goo Dolls

Dizzy Up The Girl WARNER BROS

Six albums in, the Goo Goo breakthrough. Finally propelled down US mainstream throats by the inclusion of *Iris* on the *City Of Angels* soundtrack, *DUTG* mixes sub-Jovi balladry with 80s-lite blue-collar identirock retickled for fragile post-grunge tastes. 7/10

Fleetwood Mac

Rumours Live RHINO/WARNER

Captured six months into the *Rumours* tour at the Los Angeles Forum in August '77, the titular album itself and its self-titled predecessor are covered fairly comprehensively, if somewhat stiffly. Even *Go Your Own Way* loses much in this surprisingly staid incarnation. 6/10

X-Ray Spex

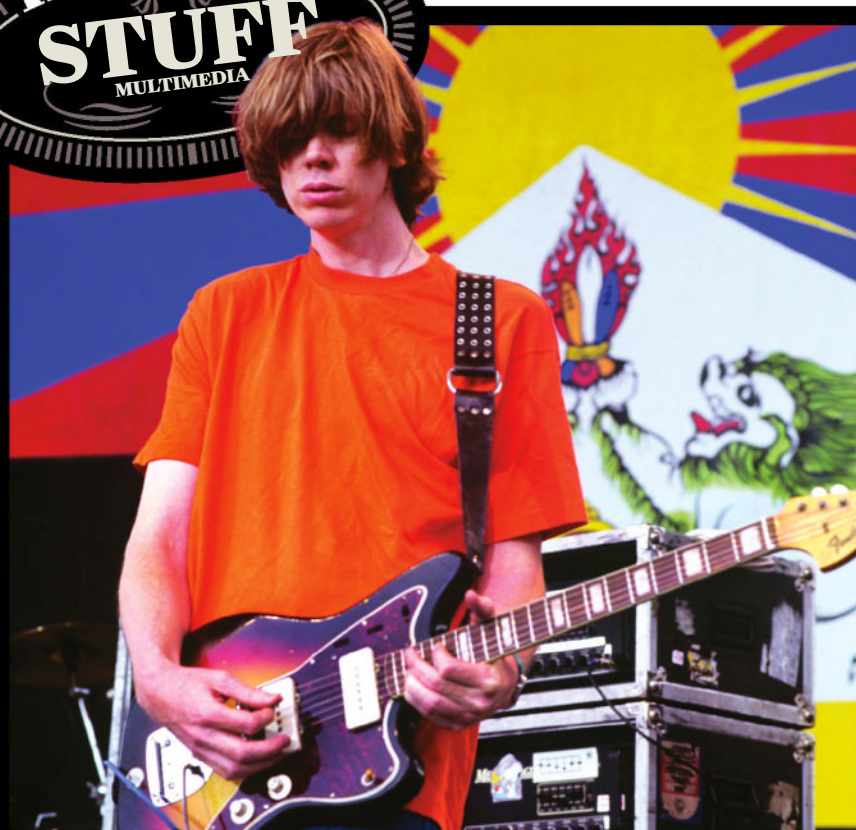
Germ Free Adolescents SECRET

If ever there was a record that deserved DayGlo pink vinyl, it's this one. Often overlooked, it's a genre classic no UK punk collection's complete without. But if you're gonna have an extra track, make sure it's *Oh Bondage! Up Yours!* rather than *Highly Inflammable*. 8/10

Manfred Mann

Hits From The Sixties UMBRELLA MUSIC

Why the Manfreds' legend doesn't loom larger in the history of 60s Britrock continues to perplex. Especially after spinning the RSG R&B (5-4-3-2-1), kitchen-sink Kink-pop (*Semi-Detached Suburban Mr James*) and gilt-edge ear worms (*Pretty Flamingo*) on these two CDs. 8/10



Sonic Life: A Memoir

Thurston Moore FABER

Sonic Youth guitar genius takes us on a wild trip down memory lane

With Sonic Youth, Thurston Moore helped to redefine what rock music could be, creating beauty from ostensibly ugly noise; a bright, burning ball of post-punk, no-wave light whose influence has rippled down through the generations. Basically, he has every reason to brag. And yet, in his exhaustive memoir, we're 100 pages in before the seeds of the band are even really sown. Instead, much of the book is a love letter to rock'n'roll, and particularly the New York punk scene of the 70s and 80s, which he threw himself into with wild abandon, driving into the city weekly in his battered VW Beetle from his home in rural Connecticut.

Much of his early wide-eyed admiration is reserved for Patti Smith, and it's telling that his fandom centres as much on her journalism and poetry as on her music. Moore planned to study journalism, partly in honour of his teacher father who died when Moore was a teenager. While his studies didn't last long – the allure of CBGB, Max's Kansas City and cheap guitars was too great – he writes beautifully. Just as Smith did with her autobiography, *Just Kids*, he grabs his reader by the hand and offers the graffiti-coated, rat-infested sights and startling new sounds of Manhattan at its edgiest

and most dangerous, and also its most creative. Being a lofty 6ft 7in, even crammed into the smallest, dingiest venues he had a bird's-eye view of the action, and he shares it with an infectious enthusiasm, be it bumping – literally – into Ramones and cantankerous members of The Damned by the bar in CBGB or witnessing the baby steps of hip-hop.

This is as much a book about fandom, and doing whatever crummy jobs are necessary to make ends meet to achieve the dream of being a musician (as well as plenty of youthful misdemeanours and bouts of destruction along the way), as it is a tale of success. Of course, there's the personal story at play too. But while his talk of the bands he loves and his own creative awakening with the guitar are vivid, his descriptions of his relationship with Sonic Youth's Kim Deal, who became his wife, are cooler and more muted, possibly to give a respectful sense of distance, given their messy split in 2011 when he left her for a London-based book editor, to whom he is now married. The real, deep passion here is reserved for the music, which, given the effect Sonic Youth have had on the alt.rock world over the passing decades, is just how it ought to be.

★★★★★
Emma Johnston



Rod Stewart: The Classic Years

Sean Egan BACKBEAT

Scotch on the rocks.



Few would argue against the opinion that Rod Stewart hit a creative peak in 1971 with his album *Every Picture Tells A Story*, then fell into straw-boater naffness from about 1975 as he became part of the Hollywood jet set.

Sean Egan's exhaustive examination of Stewart's glory years is unfortunately padded out with endless archive criticism, tedious explanations for the benefit of non-British readers (Harrow is an "upscale London neighbourhood") and line-by-line analysis of song lyrics. It may be foolish to sing, from a studio in West London, of buffalo dying in frozen fields, or twisting syntax to make 'coax' rhyme with 'jokes', but there is something mean-spirited about the reduction of *Mandolin Wind* and *Maggie May*. There's little in the way of fresh interviews or startling revelations to compensate for lengthiness, bar some unpleasant rock-star tantrums (throwing a glass of cold water over a young engineer in the studio).

★★★★★
Claudia Elliott

Before It Went Rotten: The Music That Rocked London's Pubs 1972-1976

Simon Matthews

OLDCASTLE PRESS

First-hand memories of London's mid-70s gig circuit, by those who were there.

Opening with a fictionalised account of an average night on North London's gritty music scene in 1974 – with references to *Sounds*, Scarecrow and Charlie & The Wide Boys – this fascinating account of the capital's pre-punk music scene is so full of period detail you can almost taste the Watney's Red Barrel and feel the sticky pub carpet beneath your feet.

Featuring reminiscences from former members of Ducks Deluxe, Rocky Sharpe And The Razors, Fumble, Bees Make Honey, The Fabulous Poodles and Roogalator, among many others, it paints a picture of a vibrant, multi-faceted scene unfairly dismissed by the Year Zero agitators of punk as an irrelevance. Madness, for one,

wouldn't have existed without it. As Kilburn And The High Roads' Charlie Hart points out pithily: "The term 'pub rock' is bollocks."

A suitably no-nonsense reminder of a critical period in British rock.

★★★★★
Paul Moody

Whatever Happened To Slade? When The Whole World Went Crazee

Daryl Easlea OMNIBUS

Long-overdue account of the rise and fall of the Black Country glam rockers.



As Bob Geldof says in his intro, Slade somehow "slipped through the cracks of pop history".

Although, as this account amply demonstrates, they are widely loved and respected by fans, critics and bands alike, they have been too easily reduced to the annual serving of *Merry Xmas Everybody* they provide.

Author Daryl Easlea sets this straight. He traces the band's humble Black Country origins, their various metamorphoses from hippie to skin to glam, knocked into shape by manager Chas Chandler. Perhaps the most interesting section is of their late-70s decline – having spent too long trying to break the USA, which simply didn't know what to make of them, eclipsed by the Bay City Rollers and punk, and reduced to playing hospital parties. The book offers excellent character profiles, not least of the shy, too often overlooked Jimmy Lea.

A thorough, detailed, probably definitive appraisal.

★★★★★
David Stubbs

Eddie Cochran In Person

Lee Bullman OMNIBUS PRESS

Priceless memorabilia bolsters early rock tragedy.



"Eddie Cochran was one of the reasons rock'n'roll went on to change the whole world for

a while," Lee Bullman declares in this intimately illustrated biography of the charismatic California-based rocker who gave late-50s teenagers (and future rock bands) anthems including *Twenty Flight Rock*, *C'mon Everybody*, *Summertime Blues*, *Somethin' Else* and *Three*

Steps To Heaven before perishing in a car crash on his 1960 UK tour with Gene Vincent.

The book is stacked with priceless photos capturing the photogenic multi-instrumentalist ultimate rocker once seen as the only challenger to Elvis's throne, and Bullman succinctly details a hugely promising career cut tragically short, citing future Beatles among teddy-boy rioters in Liverpool and 13-year-old Marc Bolan carrying Eddie's guitar at Finsbury Park Empire.

Any book that reminds the world of the original punks who birthed rock'n'roll has to be welcomed, and this one is a cut above.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Kris Needs

David Bowie: Rainbowman 1967-1980

Jérôme Soligny OCTOPUS

700-plus Gnome-free pages of Dave.

There have been an awful lot of books written about David Bowie. Way more than anyone, even the most obsessive fans, should ever really need. The story's been told, not least by French journalist Jérôme Soligny – he published his first Bowie tome, *Une Histoire*, back in '85 – again and again. We all know it. And yet, it seems, we don't quite know it enough. Which is why Bowie fans will lap up this nicely presented breeze-block of a volume – using the word advisedly; a second ('83-'16) is on its way – with open arms and insatiable curiosity.

Rainbowman piques interest because it's not just another biog. Drawing on abundant interviews with crucial eyewitnesses to Bowie's life and career (Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, Mick Rock, Nile Rodgers et – almost literally – al), it's a meticulous history of a remarkable artist told by those who were in the room at his most essential moments.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Ian Fortnam

Shane Embury Life...? And Napalm Death

ROCKET 88

Memoir of the stubborn, enduring grindcore warhorse. A self-confessed loner, Shane Embury never looked like the average rock star. How appropriate, then, that the tumbleweed-haired Shropshire lad became the longest-serving member of a band that never truly fitted in.

This autobiography follows

Embury from buying Slade's *Gudbuy T'Jane*, to multiple Peel sessions, making the cover of *NME*, the BBC's infamous metal documentary *Arena*, and travelling the world playing more than 5,000 gigs as a horror movie-obsessed, booze-guzzling noisnik.

Just like his group Napalm Death – the missing link between Killing Joke, the Dead Kennedys and just about any extreme metal act of note – there are many layers to Embury, who in recent years became a family man, was advised by doctors to quit alcohol and now drinks again. Punctuated with eye-witness accounts and ghosted by *CR*'s Dave Everley, *Life...? And Napalm Death* is as close as you'll get to the inside story of this unique, principled and vitally important band.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Dave Ling

Absolute Beginner: Memoirs Of The World's Best Least-Known Guitarist

Kevin Armstrong JAWBONE

Guitar slinger to the stars fires some telling shots.



It's not easy being a sideman for hire, even when you're at the peak of the game. Take Kevin Armstrong, who's assisted Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Paul McCartney, Sinéad O'Connor and Morrissey, among others. A man who woke up in a squat on Saturday morning then played Live Aid that afternoon. Sure, there's limited responsibility, and, as Armstrong attests cheerily in this unlikely page turner, drink, drugs and women (in the case of Propaganda, actual band members) may be available. Yet there's artistic and commercial insecurity, financial skulduggery, depression, and the sense of what might have been, as Armstrong reflects on his band, Local Heroes S.W. 9, whose 1980 album *Drip Dry Zone* still deserves full-scale rehabilitation.

Bowie and Iggy emerge as mostly decent but ruthless, but the real eye-opener is a rare unsanitised peek into McCartneyworld, a surreal dictatorship from which Armstrong was permanently ejected for mentioning Beatles-parodying 'band' The Rutles.

■■■■■■■■■■■

John Aizlewood

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★CLASSIC★
Rock



King's X

The enigmatic trio have never quite enjoyed the success they deserved, but they've made excellent music along the way.

King's X are the perfect example of the unstoppable force of musical brilliance meeting the immovable object that is public apathy. As unique as they are celebrated, neither the critical acclaim that greeted them when they emerged with their glorious debut album, *Out Of The Silent Planet*, in 1988 nor the small but devoted following they've amassed has ever translated into anything remotely approaching mainstream success.

The Missouri-by-way-of-Houston trio of bassist/vocalist dUg (formerly plain old Doug) Pinnick, guitarist/vocalist Ty Tabor and drummer/vocalist Jerry Gaskill had been playing together for a decade when they released that debut (Pinnick was already approaching 40). They wedded the amped-up dynamics of a classic power trio to *Sgt Pepper*-era Beatles harmonies, while Pearl Jam bassist Jeff Ament once declared that they invented grunge on account of Ty Tabor adopting a throaty, drop-D tuning long before anyone else (PJ weren't the only Seattle band to acknowledge their greatness – Alice In Chains' Layne Staley and Jerry Cantrell were avowed fans too).

The press quickly picked up on the fact that King's X had emerged from the Christian music scene and that their faith

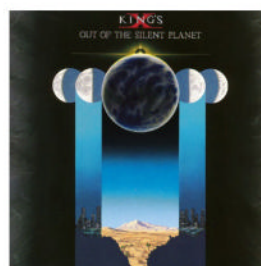
seemed to be embedded in their DNA – something which set them apart but also counted against them in the Sodom and Gomorrah that was the late 80s rock scene. The trio pushed back against the 'Christian band' tag, not entirely convincingly. It's difficult to deny you're a religious band when there's literally a cross in your name.

That initial media buzz carried on for a few years, but a lack of chart success and split from manager/producer Sam Taylor, who helped shape those initial records, saw them almost dashed on the rocks of a music industry that never truly knew what to do with them. There have been plenty of testing times since – all the members have distanced themselves from Christianity to varying degrees, dUg Pinnick came out as gay in the late 1990s to a predictable backlash from sections of the fanbase, and Jerry Gaskill suffered two serious heart attacks in the last decade. The band themselves have seemed studio-shy at times – 2022's *Three Sides Of One* was their first album in 14 years.

Thankfully they've persevered, and today their place as one of the great cult bands of the last 40 years is well cemented. Success is fleeting, but greatness endures.

Dave Everley

Essential Classics



Out Of The Silent Planet

MEGAFORCE, 1988

One of the great debuts of the 1980s, *Out Of The Silent Planet* was simultaneously muscular, heavy, delicate and devotional. The decade they'd spent playing together had served them well, with Tabor's guitar alternately jagged and ornate as it twisted around Pinnick's metallic 12-string bass, sounding way more powerful than any three-piece had a right to sound. Hard rock anthems *In The New Age*, *Power Of Love* and *King* were self-consciously Big Music, evoking early 80s U2 in their quest for spiritual connection if not in sound, but it's the aching hymn to unrequited love *Goldilox* that proved how special they were.



Gretchen Goes To Nebraska

MEGAFORCE, 1989

The trio's second album took everything they'd achieved on that stellar debut and blew it wide open. From its enigmatic, evocative title – taken from a short story written by Gaskill – down, *Gretchen Goes To Nebraska* takes in everything from hard rock to Beatles-y pop to the gospel music that Pinnick had been weaned on. Confusingly-titled opener *Out Of The Silent Planet*, *Over My Head*'s elemental soul power and *Goldilox* sequel-sort-of *Summerland* are obvious highlights, while Tabor's coruscating *Pleiades* – inspired by heretical 17th century philosopher Giordano Bruno – is one of the great overlooked King's X gems.

Superior Reputation cementing



Faith Hope Love

MEGAFORCE, 1994

The band's attempts to distance themselves from the 'are they/aren't they a Christian band' narrative wasn't helped by the title of their third album. But *Faith Hope Love* otherwise saw them pulling away from the musical template they'd followed on their first two albums, heavying things up significantly on the aptly-titled *We Are Finding Who We Are* and exhilarating single *It's Love*, and going even more psychedelic on *Mr Wilson* and *Six Broken Soldiers*. At 60 minutes it's 10 minutes too long, though the only truly grating note is Tabor's *Legal Kill*, whose gentle ambience seems to mask a queasy, if ambiguous anti-abortion message.



King's X

ATLANTIC, 1992

Four albums in and the wide-eyed wonder that had defined King's X's early days was evaporating, replaced by a more hard-bitten edge. Their final collaboration with mentor-manager Sam Taylor still featured its share of celestial melodies and heavenly harmonies – *The Big Picture's* eyes-to-the-skies exultations, *Lost In Germany's* dual Pinnick/Tabor vocals, the sitar-led highpoint *Not Just For The Dead* – but it was marked by tougher moments such as *Black Flag* and the grinding *Ooh Song*. With hindsight, it represents a tug of war between the band they were and the band they'd become.



Dogman

ATLANTIC, 1994

Dogman made the connection between King's X and grunge explicit. After splitting from Sam Taylor, they hooked up with Pearl Jam producer Brendan O'Brien and delivered the heaviest album of their career. Powered by a truly monstrous bass sound and stripped of the prettiness that marked their earlier albums, it takes a scorched earth approach musically and lyrically: there's little respite from the volume (notably, Tabor doesn't take a single lead vocal), while Pinnick expresses his growing disillusion with Christianity, not least on the 51-second hardcore blast *Go To Hell*. A testing album, but a rewarding one.



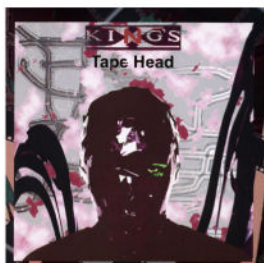
Ear Candy

ATLANTIC, 1996

This unjustly overlooked sixth album was a step back towards their old sound after the grunge-adjacent heaviness of *Dogman*. Tabor's *Mississippi Moon* is a lovely psychedelic pop gem, while *A Box* throws in those familiar chiming melodies and gorgeous harmonies. But a sense of flux surrounded it: Pinnick was wrestling with both his sexuality and pretty much done with his faith, as illustrated by his mournful declaration that '*religion burned me at the stake*' on the *Looking For Love*, while they were reaching the end of their time on Atlantic.

The most under-appreciated album in a career full of them.

Good Worth exploring



Tape Head

1998, METAL BLADE

Their first album for their new label Metal Blade was framed by Pinnick's public revelation that he was gay, losing them a large chunk of their Christian audience but giving him personal liberation. Musically, *Tape Head* set the pattern for many of the albums that followed: flashes of transcendence amid music that was unique by other bands' standards but merely solid by King X's own. In the former camp are Tabor's Beatles-y *Ocean*, Pinnick's pleading *Little Bit Of Soul* and the charged *Higher Than God*. Still, the less said about the dirgey *Mr Evil* and the pointless closing jam *Walter Bela Farkas* (*Live In Peace New York*) the better.



Please Come Home... Mr Bulbous

METAL BLADE, 2000

If *Ear Candy* is the trio's most undervalued album, then their first record of the new millennium is their most divisive, with much of fans' opprobrium aimed at that admittedly godawful title. But for 'divisive' read 'experimental' – opening song *Fish Bowl Man* kicks off with a snare drum rattle that predates *St Anger* by three years before swinging between wilfully grating chug and blossoming chorus, while *Charlie Sheen's* jangling progadelica and the muttered malevolence of *Smudge* are the sound of a band pushing at its own boundaries. They retreated back to safer ground soon after.



Three Sides Of One

INSIDEOUT, 2022

Kings X's first album in 14 years was fuelled by a generous amount of pent up energy. Howling opening track *Let It Rain*, the billowing *Nothing But The Truth* and Tabor's lilting, lovely *Take The Time* find the band rolling back the years, while *Flood Pt.1* sees a quietly seething Pinnick once more casting a jaundiced apostate's eye over humanity: '*I used to say that all we need is love*', he sings. '*Now I'm think that what we need is a flood*'.

With Tabor and Gaskill now in their sixties and Pinnick in his seventies, *Three Sides Of One* could be their final album. If it is, it's a fine full stop.

Avoid



Manic Moonlight

METAL BLADE, 2001

The familiar caveat applies: King's X have never made a truly bad album, they've just made less good ones. And *Manic Moonlight* is the least good. Perhaps they were running out of juice after 20 years of largely rewardless effort, or maybe they were distracted by the various side-projects they'd launched (Pinnick's Poundhound, Tabor's Jughead and prog trio The Jelly Jam), but funk rock plodder *Believe* and directionless wah-wah jam *Skeptical Winds* don't add anything to their legacy, while various square-peg electronic effects can't paper over the cracks.

The powerful *Jenna* is the album's one keeper.

Essential Playlist

Power Of Love

Out Of The Silent Planet

Goldilox

Out Of The Silent Planet

Over My Head

Gretchen Goes To Nebraska

Summerland

Gretchen Goes To Nebraska

Pleiades

Gretchen Goes To Nebraska

We Are Finding Who We Are

Faith Hope Love

It's Love

Faith Hope Love

Lost In Germany

King's X

Not Just For The Dead

King's X

Dogman

Dogman

Black The Sky

Dogman

Looking For Love

Ear Candy

Mississippi Moon

Ear Candy

Little Bit Of Soul

Tape Head

Charlie Sheen

Please Come Home... Mr Bulbous

Jenna

Manic Moonlight

Let It Rain

Three Sides Of One

Flood Pt.1

Three Sides Of One

THE CULT PRESENTS

DEATH CULT

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LIJIREFRAIN

NOVEMBER 2023

MON	06	BELFAST	TELEGRAPH	
TUE	07	DUBLIN	30LYMPIA	LOW TICKETS
THU	09	SHEFFIELD	FOUNDRY	LOW TICKETS
FRI	10	LIVERPOOL	MOUNTFORD HALL	
SUN	12	GLASGOW	BARROWLAND	SOLD OUT
MON	13	NOTTINGHAM	ROCK CITY	
TUE	14	BIRMINGHAM	O ₂ INSTITUTE	
THU	16	BOURNEMOUTH	O ₂ ACADEMY	
FRI	17	NORWICH	UEA	
SAT	18	MANCHESTER	ALBERT HALL	SOLD OUT
MON	20	LONDON	BRIXTON ELECTRIC	SOLD OUT
TUE	21	LONDON	BRIXTON ELECTRIC	SOLD OUT

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P **105**
**Stonedead
Festival**

Which bands brought
the 'Dead to life?



LIVE!
THE HIGH-VOLTAGE
WHAT'S ON GUIDE
EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM (REVIEWS) AND DAVE LING (TOURS)

P **94** INTERVIEWS
P **97** TOUR DATES
P **100** LIVE REVIEWS



LIVE!



|||||
"I no longer need singers. Over my career there was only a small [period of time] when I used singers. It's just easier to do it myself."

Yngwie Malmsteen

The controversial Swedish-born, US-based guitar hero previews three rare UK shows.

Love him or hate him (and probably for more than one singer who's worked with him since he came along in the 80s it's the latter), you can't ignore the one-time fastest guitar in the west.

Before coming to Europe you play a month-long co-headline US tour with Glenn Hughes. As Hughes is a bit of a hero of yours, how do you see that panning out?

I've known Glenn since I was eighteen years old. My first show in America was with him back in 1982. So being out on the road together will be lots of fun.

Your current tour is billed as a Greatest Hits one. I've made so many solo albums, that compiling a set list is very difficult, so it changes every night. There

will be a few songs from my latest album, *Parabellum*, and then we'll do what some people consider the classics: *Far Beyond The Sun*, *Black Star* and *You Don't Remember, I'll Never Forget*.

***Parabellum* came out more than two years ago. Is a follow-up on the way?**

I could make a new record right now – easy. Some of my new stuff will start creeping into the set. But when I do a new record, I want something that knocks me out completely. So I'm in no hurry.

Your new online instructional course, MaestroClass, is described as "the ultimate neo-classical guitar masterclass". How does it work, and what does it teach?

Close-up cameras focus on my left and right hands, with tablature, and if you want then you can slow everything down. It's for all abilities. I talk a lot; I explain why I do what I do and how I do it.

On stage you perform in front of a literal wall of amplifiers, from the floor to the ceiling. You mean my Marshalls? Yeah! [Laughs]

The question that's often asked about walls of amps and speakers is how many are plugged in? There's usually about twelve [active] heads. They all work, they're all real.

So why do you need so many?

I love Marshalls. I've always loved them. I just like to

have a lot of them. On the road with me now I have fifty-two heads.

For the past few years, as well as playing guitar you've also handled lead vocals. Your views of singers – and also their opinions of you – have been very well documented. How do you feel it is working out?

I need to explain something to you. The way I work is different to everybody else. I can wake up in the middle of the night and hear a perfectly completed song – including the production. Therefore I don't need producers, outside writers, and I no longer need singers. When I had singers, I wrote the vocal melodies the way I heard them in my head and taught them to Graham Bonnet or whoever. Until I came to the States I was the singer, guitar player and writer, all I needed to do was hire a bass player and drummer. Over my career there was only a small [period of time] when I used singers. It's just easier to do it myself.

You've also started to squash all of the other musicians to one side of the stage.

No, no, no! There were just a couple of gigs where we did that because there was no room.

That's how it was at the Forum in London back in 2017.

I like to be in the middle. I'm not going to be over to one side. So there's me [in the centre], and we have the bass player and the keyboard player and drummer behind me. There were a couple of gigs in England [where they were at the side], but that's not how we do things. No.

In June this year you turned sixty. Did it feel like a big deal?

It probably should have done, because it's a big milestone, but it wasn't. I'm in better shape now than I was at twenty-five years old. I don't touch alcohol or drugs. I'm incredibly healthy and I feel amazing.

A lot of people love to hate you. How much of that do you feel is deserved, and to any degree do you feel misunderstood?

Nobody is perfect. But people really don't understand what I'm doing. This is not a band. It hasn't been a band since 1984. That's strange for rock'n'roll people to comprehend, but it's how I work. I'm a painter. I won't do half a painting and call you up and say: "Dave, please finish it for me." Working with others, I felt like I was subtracting something, and not adding. That's often mistaken for egotism, but really it isn't. Singers have a real problem with the fact that they are part of the *ensemble*, performing *my* music. They just don't get it.

You've made a classical album, a collection of blues covers and a regular covers album...

[Interrupting] You forgot my book [*Relentless: The Memoir*, 2013]. [Laughs] Don't read any of the others.

What remains for you in terms of boxes to tick?

Nothing specific, but each night when I go on stage I play songs that I wrote forty years ago, and I challenge myself to play them differently. I'm not a jukebox. And that's what makes things exciting. Every time I plug in a guitar, things still feel new, and I'm very happy about that. **DL**



Gov't Mule

The American band play a one-off UK show in November.

Formed in 1994 by guitarist Warren Haynes and bassist Allen Woody (the latter died six years later) – both members of the Allman Brothers Band – American southern rock jam group Gov't Mule have carved out a successful career while flying beneath the radar. Haynes sets the scene for their visit to the UK to promote their thirteenth studio album, *Peace... Like A River*.

For a hard-gigging band like the Mule, lockdown must have been a living hell.

We were going crazy sitting at home, so I wrote lots and lots of material, which is why we made two albums at once [2021's *Heavy Load Blues* was recorded concurrently with *Peace... Like A River*]. It was the only way to be creative.

The tour you are currently playing in the States combines *The Dark Side Of The Mule*, the band's interpretation of Pink Floyd classics, with a set of your own material.

It's a two-and-a-half-hour show, sixty minutes of our songs and an hour and a half of our interpretations of those Floyd greats. Some are performed faithfully, though we stretch out and improvise upon the longer pieces. It's a concept we're about to retire, unfortunately, so it's unlikely to be seen by British audiences.

Your set-list changes each night. With 178 songs to choose from, no two Gov't Mule shows are completely alike.

We do that mostly for ourselves, to keep from becoming bored, but through the years our audience has really grown around that concept. It all started with the Grateful Dead, of course.

At your upcoming show in London, presumably the audience will get to hear a large chunk of *Peace... Like A River*?

Yeah, we're adding more and more of it as we go along, and by the time we get to London we'll be

playing quite a few of those songs. Eventually we aim to play everything from the album.

How did Billy Bob Thornton come to sing a song, *The River Only Flows One Way*, on the album?

He and I have been friends for quite a few years. Billy has a career as a musician as well as being an actor. When I wrote that song it was the first one I've done in which the verses needed to be spoken and not sung. What he did was perfect for the song.

Another track, *Shake Our Way Out*, which features Billy Gibbons, is a nice, groovy moment, but also a bit edgy.

I agree. The song has a ZZ Top influence, which is why I wanted Billy on it. He and I have worked together a lot and known each other since the early nineties. Having his voice on it really adds to the song's sense of humour.

How familiar with the London Palladium are you?

I've never played there but it's a legendary venue. Getting to play there will be a dream come true.

Amusingly, those with VIP tickets enable them to be greeted and hosted by their very own Red Coat Butler.

I didn't know that. It's kind of the antithesis of rock'n'roll, isn't it? But kinda interesting.

Grateful Dead offshoot Dead & Company recently retired after a final concert in San Francisco. Should we be fearful for the future of rock music?

I'm quite hopeful, actually. In the last five-to-ten years I've seen more promising new bands and artists than in a very long time. If I'm right, then acts such as Marcus King, Larkin Poe and Celisse Henderson can all carry this style of music into the future. **DL**

Gov't Mule play the London Palladium on November 6.

Yngwie's British dates run from November 3 to 5.



Philip Seth Campbell

The former Temperance Movement and Byron Family frontman is now flying (almost) solo.

A though more familiar as a frontman, first for The Temperance Movement and then The Byron Family, Glasgow-born Campbell started out as a solo artist. He resumed that status in 2022. His new album is titled *City Lights*.

Are you nervous ahead of the upcoming tour?

Yeah. To be coming back from the fucking mess of The Temperance Movement, then lockdown, and now I'm trying to start all over again. It's nerve-racking – especially as it's just me and a piano player. I cannot afford a band. The show will bare my soul, trying to tell the story of where I am now.

How do you look back on your time with The Temperance Movement?

I loved the Temp, especially during the early days, though I'm aware that half of my fans are people who are heartbroken that the Temp split up. That's a difficult thing to negotiate, but I must be hard-headed and the music [I'm playing now] is as good as anything I've ever done.

My other fear is that is there even any point? Here I am still harping on about David Bowie, when to a generic 12-year-old audience does anybody even give a fuck?

During the formative times of your next group,

The Byron Family, you predicted that the Temperance guys would understand your reasons for leaving as the new band progressed.

The Byron Family probably will still figure in my life. But my being in The Temperance Movement wasn't about songwriting. In that band I compromised on songs – the arrangement of them and their length. I cut myself off from being me. The Byron Family record has three of the best songs I've ever written. The Temp had my voice but they didn't get my songs.

Will The Byron Family, in turn, understand your reasons for leaving when they hear *City Lights*?

The Byron Family has been structured to be more like Ryan Adams & The Cardinals or Neil Young & Crazy Horse. That's what it *could* be. The Bysons will ride again. I don't think the Temp will.

The album is a mixed bag; *Hasta Luego*, for example, channels Springsteen, the title track is a slice of soulful gusto, and *Soul Fire* tips its hat at The Temperance Movement.

Hasta Luego is Springsteen. It's a song I wrote years ago wanting to sound like *Born To Run*. It's defiantly stupid.

Sober Boy, with its references to 'making all the same mistakes again' and never taking 'a chance upon yourself' must be autobiographical?

I've never really believed in myself, that's why I drink and take drugs. I know I keep making the same mistakes again. More importantly, I see my son and my daughter doing the same thing. Life is cyclical.

Are you sober at the moment?

I am, but it's been a struggle. I made the record that way; I put all of my effort into that. There's fear about that too. But there *should* be fear.

You've admitted being "a bit wayward". Is it a struggle to control that?

Absolutely, it is. My whole life is about that control and that loss of control, telling yourself that you're sober when you're not. I go around and around and around with all of that. Unfortunately, those days of Iggy Pop and Lou Reed being dark and wayward and *fascinating* are long gone.

Thanks for the chat.

You're welcome. I don't mind people knowing that I'm broken, or that my bum crack is showing. I've always worn my scars on my sleeve. I'm saying to people: I'm fucked up just like you. To all those forty-five-year-olds in the front row looking for a last-gasp bit of rock 'n' roll: I'm going to give it to ya! **DL**

Campbell's tour runs until November 1.

Tour Dates

ALABAMA 3

Newcastle	University	Nov 10
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 11
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 16
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 17
Edinburgh	La Belle Angel	Nov 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 19
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 23
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 25
Southampton	1865	Nov 30
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 1
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 2
Bournemouth	Academy	Dec 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Dec 7
Bristol	Academy	Dec 8
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 9

THE ALARM ACOUSTIC

Dyserth	The Red	Nov 5
St Albans	The Horn	Nov 9
Hastings	Black Box	Nov 10
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 12
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Nov 15
Leeds	Old Woollen	Nov 22
Darwen	Library Theatre	Nov 23
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 26

THE ALMIGHTY, BALAAM & THE ANGEL

Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 30
Manchester	Academy	Dec 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 2

THE ANSWER, KIRA MAC

Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 15
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 16
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 17
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Nov 18
Belfast	Limelight	Dec 9

BATTLE BEAST

London	Brixton Electric	Nov 25
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 26
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 28
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 29
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 1

BLINK 182, THE STORY SO FAR

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 14
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 15

BLUE OCTOBER

Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 21
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 22
Dublin	Academy	Oct 23
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 25
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 26
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 28
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 29

GRAHAM BONNET BAND

Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 25
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 26
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 28
London	Islington Academy	Nov 29
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 1

BRAVE RIVAL

Beer	Blues Festival	Oct 14
Aldershot	West End Theatre	Oct 20
Hull	Adelphi	Oct 26
Birmingham	Joe Joe Jims	Oct 27
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Nov 4
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Nov 9
Whitby	Rocks	Nov 10
Doncaster	The Leopard	Nov 11
Sheffield	The Greystones	Nov 17
Keighley	Studio 5	Nov 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Dec 1
Brighton	Komedia	Dec 22

EDGAR BROUGHTON

Hull	Wrecking Ball	Nov 10
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 25

DANNY BRYANT

Derby	Flowerpot	Oct 14
Sheffield	Greystones	Oct 18
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 19
London	Camden Dingwalls	Nov 2
Darlington	Forum Music Centre	Jan 12

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, THE CARDS

Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 21
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 22
Leeds	Warehouse	Nov 23
Manchester	Bread Shed	Nov 24

Derby	Hairy Dog	Nov 25
Oxford	Academy	Nov 26
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 28
London	Islington Academy	Nov 29
Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock	Nov 30
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 1
Birmingham	Institute 2	Dec 2

PHILIP SETH CAMPBELL

London	Hoxton Hall	Oct 14
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 15
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Oct 16
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 17
Birkenhead	Future Yard	Oct 18
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Oct 22
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Oct 26
Glasgow	Mono Café Bar	Oct 28
Dublin	Workman's Club	Oct 31
Belfast	Black Box	Nov 1

CARDINAL BLACK

Looe	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 2
Bristol	Trinity	Dec 5
Hastings	Black Box	Dec 6
London	Camden Dingwalls	Dec 7

CATS IN SPACE

Wimbome	Tivoli Theatre	Nov 9
Ilfracombe	Landmark Theatre	Nov 10
Maidenhead	Norden Farm	Nov 11
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 13
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 15
Swansea	Patti Pavilions	Dec 16
Stockport	Forum Theatre	Mar 1
Bathgate	Regal	Mar 2

CAVALERA

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 9
Manchester	Academy	Nov 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 11

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Nov 29
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Nov 30
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Dec 1

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Ramsgate	Music Hall	Nov 9
Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 10
Northampton	Black Prince	Nov 11

THE DAMN TRUTH

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 16
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Oct 18
Northampton	Black Prince	Oct 22
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 24
Dover	Booking Hall	Oct 26

DANKO JONES, RADKEY

Bristol	Thekla	Dec 12
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Dec 15
London	Highbury Garage	Dec 16

THE DARKNESS

Belfast	Telegraph Building	Dec 2
Dublin	Olympia	Dec 3
Edinburgh	Academy	Dec 5
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 7
Norwich	UEA	Dec 8
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 9
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 11
Manchester	New Century Hall	Dec 12
Bristol	Beacon	Dec 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 15
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Dec 16
Leeds	Academy	Dec 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 19
Brighton	Dome	Dec 20
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 22

DEAD MAN'S WHISKEY, TWISTER

Gravesend	Red Lion	Nov 11
Norwich	Brickmakers	Nov 12
Cannock	The Station	Nov 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 15
Glasgow	Audio	Nov 16
Leeds	Santiago Bar	Nov 18
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 19
Cardiff	Fuel Rock Club	Nov 22
Swindon	Level III	Nov 23
Liverpool	Zanzibar Club	Nov 24
Southampton	Suburbia	Nov 25

DEPECHE MODE

London	O2 Arena	Jan 22, 27
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jan 24

FOO FIGHTERS



Over the years they've become something of a phenomenon. This will be the first time the UK gets to check out their new drummer.

See below for dates. Currently June 13 to June 27.

Manchester	AO Arena	Jan 29
Glasgow	Hydro	Jan 31

PAUL D'ANNO

London	Camden Underworld	Nov 29
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THE DUST CODA

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 17
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 18
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 19
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 20
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Oct 21
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Oct 24
Sheffield	Foundry	Oct 25
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 26
Birmingham	Institute 3	Oct 27
London	Camden Dingwalls	Oct 28

THE ENID

Bury	The Met	Oct 13
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 19
Southampton	Hanger Farm Arts	Oct 20

EUROPE

Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 17
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Oct 21
Salford	The Lowry	Oct 22
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 24
London	Palladium	Oct 25, 16

EXTREME, LIVING COLOUR

Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 27
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 28
Manchester	Academy	Nov 30
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Dec 1
Bristol	Academy	Dec 3
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 4

FALL OUT BOY, PVRIS

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 27
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 28
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 29
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 31
London	O2 Arena	Nov 2, 3
Cardiff	International Arena	Nov 4

SAMANTHA FISH, JESSE DAYTON

Sunderland	The Fire Station	Oct 19
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Bristol	SWX	Oct 22
York	Barbican	Oct 24
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 25
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 26
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 27
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 28
Glasgow	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 30

THE FLOWER KINGS

Southampton	1865	Oct 19
London	Camden Dingwalls	Oct 20

FM

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 26
Tunbridge Wells	Assembly Hall	Dec 1

FOCUS

Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 9
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Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Nov 10
Great Yarmouth	HRH Festival	Nov 11
London	Bush Hall	Nov 12
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Nov 14
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 16
Howden	Shire Hall	Nov 17
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Nov 18
Sale	Waterside Arts Centre	Nov 19
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 21
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 22
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Nov 23
Troon	Winterstorm Concert Hall	Nov 24
Southampton	1865	Nov 26

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 13, 15
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jun 17
London	Stadium	Jun 20, 21
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 25
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 27

FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND

Norwich	UEA	Oct 13
Cardiff	International Arena	Oct 14
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 15

Recommended

GINGER PLAYS THE WILDHEARTS

Shrewsbury	Albert's Shed	Oct 20
Southampton	Joiners	Oct 27
Harlow	Burnt Mill Social Club	Nov 24
London	West Hampstead Arts Centre	Dec 9, 13
Cambridge	Six Six Bar	Dec 10
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Dec 11
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 14
Huddersfield	The Parish	Dec 15
Sheffield	The Greystones	Dec 17, 18
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Dec 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 23
Mexborough	Imperial Music Venue	Jan 13
Leicester	The Musician	Mar 30

THE GODFATHERS

Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Nov 8
Manchester	Canvas 2	Nov 9
London	Islington Academy	Nov 10

GOV'T MULE

London	Palladium	Nov 6
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GREEN LUNG

Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 22
Manchester	Gorilla	Nov 23
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 24
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 25
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 26
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 30
Norwich	Arts Centre	Dec 1
Southampton	Joiners	Dec 2
Brighton	Patterns	Dec 3
London	King's Cross Scala	Dec 10

GRETA VAN FLEET, MT JOY

London	Wembley Arena	Nov 14
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LIVE!

Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 16
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 19
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 20

GUN

Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 2
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 7
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 9

HALESTORM, BLACK VEIL BRIDES

London	Wembley Arena	Dec 9
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STEVE HARLEY & COCKNEY REBEL

Bristol	St George's	Nov 28
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Nov 30
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Dec 1
Peterborough	The Cresset	Dec 2
Buxton	Opera House	Dec 15
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 22

ROBERT HART'S BAD CO FEAT DAVE BUCKETT CALDWELL

London	Putney Half Moon	Nov 22
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HAWKLORDS

Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 13
Preston	Vinyl Tap	Oct 14
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 15
Southampton	1865	Oct 18
Hitchin	Club 85	Oct 19
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 20
Bridgwater	Cobblestones	Oct 21
London	Camden Forge Club	Oct 22
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 24
Nottingham	Boat Club	Oct 25
Margate	Oldby's Soul Café	Oct 26
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Oct 27

HELMET

Leeds	Key Club	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 6
Dublin	Academy	Dec 8
Limerick	Dolans	Dec 9
Belfast	Limelight	Dec 10
Glasgow	Cathouse	Dec 11
Manchester	Club Academy	Dec 12
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Dec 13

THE HOT DAMN!

Frome	Tree House	Nov 3
Birmingham	Asylum	Nov 4
Reading	Face Bar	Nov 5
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 17
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 19

THE HIVES

Leeds	Academy	Mar 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 29
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Mar 30
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 1
Bristol	Academy	Apr 2
Brighton	Dome	Apr 3
Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 5
Manchester	Academy	Apr 6
Dublin	Olympia	Apr 8
Norwich	UEA	Apr 10
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 13

GLENN HUGHES, THE DAMN TRUTH

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 15
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 17
Glasgow	QMU	Oct 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 21
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Oct 23
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 25
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 28
Manchester	Academy	Oct 29

AN 80TH BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR BERT JANSCH

London	Royal Festival Hall	Nov 4
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JETHRO TULL

Bournemouth	Pavilion	Apr 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 20
London	Palladium	Apr 22
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 23
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 29
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 30
Gateshead	The Sage	May 2
Sheffield	City Hall	May 3
Salford	The Lowry	May 5
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 6

LAURENCE JONES

Porthcawl	Planet Rockstock	Dec 1
Southampton	The Brook	Dec 7
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 14
Sheffield	The Greystones	Dec 15
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Dec 16
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Feb 4
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Feb 9

Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Feb 10
Hastings	Black Box	Mar 1

JUDAS PRIEST, SAXON, URIAH HEPP

Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 11
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 15
Bournemouth	International Centre	Mar 17
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Mar 19
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 21

KING KING

London	Camden Dingwalls	Nov 2
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Nov 3
Bury	The Met	Nov 4
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 5
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Nov 8
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 9
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Nov 10
Stockton-on-Tees	ARC	Nov 11
Glenrothes	Roths Halls	Nov 17
Clitheroe	The Grand	Nov 18
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Nov 19
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 21
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Nov 22
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Nov 23

LAIBACH

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 8
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Recommended

LARKIN POE, THE SHEEPDOGS

Bristol	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 18
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 20
London	Roundhouse	Oct 21

TILL LINDEMANN

London	Wembley Arena	Dec 12
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LINDISFARNE

Brecon	Theatr Brycheiniog	Oct 14
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 15
Glasgow	Mackintosh Queen's Cross	Oct 21
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 1
Tenbury Wells	The Regal	Nov 2
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts	Nov 3
Lowdham	Village Hall	Nov 4
Morecambe	Platform	Nov 24
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 30, Dec 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic Music Room	Dec 2, 3
Kinross	Green Hotel	Dec 8, 9
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 10
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Dec 15
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 23

LIVING COLOUR

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 26
Buckley	Tivoli	Dec 2

THE LONG RYDERS

Manchester	Rebellion	Oct 17
Edinburgh	Liquid Room	Oct 18
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 19
Birmingham	The Crossing	Oct 20
Gillingham	Glassbox Theatre	Oct 21

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 3
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 4
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 5

MARILLION

Wolverhampton	The Halls	Nov 24
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 26

MASSIVE WAGONS

Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 14
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 15
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 16
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Nov 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 19
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Nov 21
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 23
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 24
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 25

CHANTEL MCGREGOR

Cannock	The Station	Oct 13
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 21
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts	Oct 22
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 17
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 2
Halifax	Albany Arcade	Nov 23
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 25
Looe	Blues Rhythm & Rck Fest	Dec 2
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Dec 22
Barton upon Humber	Ropewalk	Jan 27
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Feb 1
Blackpool	Love Live Festival	Feb 10
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 23

EXTREME



Unfairly pigeonholed because of that atypical hit, there's a lot more meat to them than that. Living Colour open, so get there early.

See previous page for dates. Currently November 27 to December 4.

LUKE MORLEY, HILLBILLY VEGAS

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jan 25
Glasgow	Cathouse	Jan 26
Newcastle	Riverside	Jan 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jan 29
Cardiff	Globe	Jan 30
London	Islington Academy	Jan 31

MR. BIG

Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 19
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 23

MOSTLY AUTUMN

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 17
Bury	The Met	Nov 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 2
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 6
Southampton	1865	Dec 8
York	The Crescent	Dec 10

JARED JAMES NICHOLS, DEWOLFF

Manchester	Rebellion	Oct 13
Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 14
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 15
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 16
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 17

OZRIC TENTACLES, GONG

Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 17
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 19
Sheffield	Academy 2	Nov 20
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 21
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 23
Bristol	Academy	Nov 24
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 25
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 26
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 28
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 29
Bournemouth	Cheese & Grain	Nov 30
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 1
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 2

PARADISE LOST, MY DYING BRIDE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 1
Bradford	St George's Hall	Dec 14

ROBERT PLANT PRESENTS SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN

Guilford	G Live	Nov 2
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 5
Bournemouth	Pavilion Theatre	Nov 7
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 8
Salford	The Lowry	Nov 11
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 13
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Nov 16
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 17
Grimsby	Auditorium	Nov 19
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 20
Bradford	St George's Hall	Nov 22
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Nov 23

PRAYING MANTIS

Hastings	Black Box	Nov 22
Raynes Park	The Cavern	Nov 23
Cannock	The Station	Nov 24
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 25

THE PRODIGY

Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 16
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 18
Brighton	Centre	Nov 20
Cardiff	International Arena	Nov 21
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 23
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 24, 25

SUZI QUATRO

Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 12
Brighton	Dome	Nov 13
London	Palladium	Nov 15
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 16
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 18

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, THE CHATS, DEEP TAN

Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 14
London	O2 Arena	Nov 15
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 18
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 19
Stockton-on-Tees	Globe Theatre	Nov 20
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 22

QUICKSAND

Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 21
London	Islington Academy	Oct 22

FÉLIX RABIN

Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 19
Sheffield	Greystones	Nov 22
Cardiff	Acapella Studios	Nov 30

RAVEN, GIRLSCHOOL, ALKATRAZZ, AIRFORCE

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Feb 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Feb 15
Manchester	Academy	Feb 16
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Feb 17

THE RAVEN AGE

London	St Pancras Lafayette	Nov 5
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 7
Glasgow	Attic	Nov 8
Dublin	Academy 2	Nov 10
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 11
Birmingham	Asylum	Nov 13
Bristol	Exchange	Nov 15

TERRY REID

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
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REZILLOS, THE PROFESSIONALS

Sheffield	Leadmill	Oct 27
Manchester	Rebellion	Oct 28
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 3
Leamington Spa	The Assembly	Nov 4
Gillingham	Great Hall	Nov 17
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 18

RHINO'S REVENGE

Leicester	The Musician	Oct 14
Chesterfield	Real Time	Oct 15
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Oct 17
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Oct 20
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 21
Poynton	Bluefunk Rhythm & Blues	Oct 22
Winchester	Railway	Oct 28

London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 29
Henley-on-Thames	Crooked Billet	Oct 30
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Nov 2
Dover	Priory	Nov 3

RIVAL SONS, L.A. EDWARDS

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 13
Newcastle	NX	Oct 14
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 16
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Academy	Oct 18
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 20
Bristol	Academy	Oct 21
Southampton	Guildhall	Oct 22

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER

Hastings	Black Box	Nov 18
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 22
Troon	WinterStorm Festival	Nov 23
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 23
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Nov 25

FRANCIS ROSSI, TUNES & CHAT

Newtown	Hafren	Oct 13
Melton Mobrai	Melton Theatre	Oct 14
Coventry	Albany	Oct 15
St Helens	Theatre Royal	Oct 16
Herne Bay	Kings Hall	Oct 20
Dorking	Halls	Oct 21
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Oct 24
Mansfield	Palace	Oct 25
Bradford	St George's Hall	Oct 27
Blyth	Phoenix Theatre	Oct 28
Blackburn	Windsor Suite	Oct 29
Motherwell	Concert Hall	Oct 31
Musselburgh	Brunton	Nov 1
Aberdeen	Tivoli	Nov 3
Oban	Corran Halls	Nov 4
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Nov 5
Northallerton	Forum	Nov 7
Redditch	Palace	Nov 8
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Nov 10
Stourbridge	Town Hall	Nov 11
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Nov 12
Swansea	Grand Theatre	Nov 14
Milford Haven	Torch	Nov 15
Porthcawl	Grand Pavilion	Nov 17
Frome	Memorial Theatre	Nov 18
Yeovil	Westlands	Nov 19
Corby	The Core	Nov 21
Runcorn	Brindley	Nov 22
Workington	Carnegie Hall	Nov 24
Burnley	Mechanics	Nov 25
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 26
Barrow in Furness	The Forum	Nov 28

ULI JON ROTH

Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 21
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 22
Leeds	Key	Nov 23
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 24
Newcastle	Riverside	Nov 26
Manchester	Canvas	Nov 27
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 29

PHILIP SAYCE, TROY REDFERN

Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 19
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 21
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 24
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 25

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP, NIGHT DEMON

Troon	WinterStorm Festival	Nov 23
Dublin	Academy	Nov 24
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 28
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 29
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 30
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 1
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock Festival	Dec 2

SARI SCHORR, MATT PEARCE & THE MUTINY

York	Crescent	Oct 25
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 26
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Oct 27
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Oct 28
Leek	Foxlowe Arts	Oct 29
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 31
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 1
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 2
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Nov 3
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Nov 4

CONNOR SELBY

Bristol	The Crown	Oct 18
New Milton	Forest Arts	Oct 20
Reading	Oakford Social Club	Oct 21

SILVER MOTH

Totnes	Barrel House	Nov 5
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Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 7
Lewes	Conservative Club	Nov 8
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Nov 9
Glasgow	Stereo	Nov 11
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Nov 12
London	Hackney Oslo	Nov 13

SISTERS OF MERCY, VIRGINMARS

Bristol	Marble Factory	Nov 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 16
Newcastle	NX	Nov 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 19
Manchester	Academy	Nov 21
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 22

SKINDRED

Cambridge	Junction	Oct 13
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 19
Newcastle	NX	Oct 20
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 21
Margate	Dreamland	Oct 26
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 27
Bristol	Academy	Oct 28
Sheffield	Leadmill	Nov 3
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Nov 4
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 10
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 11
Belfast	Limelight 1	Nov 17
Dublin	Academy	Nov 18
Manchester	Academy	Mar 14
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 16

SLADE

Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 3
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Dec 5
Egham	Royal Holloway SU	Dec 8
Leicester	Academy	Dec 15
Sheffield	Foundry	Dec 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 18
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 19
Margate	Dreamland	Dec 21
Oxford	Academy	Dec 22
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 23

SLEEP TOKEN

London	Wembley Arena	Dec 16
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SOEN

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 13
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BRUCE SOORD

London	Kensington Nells	Oct 14
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SUPERSUCKERS, WARNER E HODGES BAND

Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 13
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 15
Cambridge	Six Six Bar	Oct 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 18
London	Islington Academy	Oct 19

SWEET

Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Dec 1
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun	Dec 2
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 8
Glasgow	Queen Margaret Union	Dec 9
Sunderland	Fire Station	Dec 10
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Dec 14
Manchester	Academy	Dec 15
Lytham	Lowther Pavilion	Dec 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 20
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 21
Poole	Lighthouse	Dec 22
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 23

TANGERINE DREAM

Bexhill-on-Sea	De Le Warr Pavilion	Nov 5
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 6
London	Palladium	Nov 8
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 9
Manchester	Albert Hall	Nov 10
Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 11
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 12
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 13
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 14

COREY TAYLOR

Leeds	Academy	Nov 8
Wolverhampton	Civic	Nov 9
Manchester	Academy	Nov 11
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 12
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 14

TERRORVISION

Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 2
Bradford	St George's Hall	Nov 3
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 4

THESE WICKED RIVERS

Southampton	The Loft	Dec 1
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 2
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Dec 6



SISTERS OF MERCY

Still led by only remaining original member Andrew Eldritch, still deliciously dark in places, and still worth the price of a ticket.

See left for dates. Currently November 15 to November 22.

Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 7
Sheffield	Corporation	Dec 8
Glasgow	Audio	Dec 9
London	Islington Academy	Dec 13
Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 14
Newcastle	Anarchy Brewery	Dec 15
Derby	Hairy Dog	Dec 16
Bristol	Thekla	Dec 17

THOSE DAMN CROWS

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 13
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 14
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 16
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 17

TYKETTO, THIS HOUSE WE BUILT

Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 3
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 25
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 28
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Nov 30
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 1
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Dec 2
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 3

VEGA, KIM JENNETT

Dover	Booking Hall	Oct 13
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Oct 14
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Oct 15
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Oct 20
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 21
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 23

VIRGINMARS

Buckley	Tivoli	Dec 8
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VOYAGER, EARTHSIDE

Manchester	Club Academy	Oct 20
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 21, 22
Glasgow	Slay	Oct 24
Liverpool	Academy 2	Oct 25

WARRIOR SOUL

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 9
Reading	Face Bar	Nov 10
Crumlin	Patriot	Nov 12
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 16
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Nov 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 18

WHEATUS

Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Oct 13
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Oct 14
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 15
Margate	Olby's Creative Hub	Oct 17
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnery's	Oct 18
Worthing	Factory Live	Oct 19
London	Highbury Garage	Oct 20
Guildford	Boilerroom	Oct 21
Swansea	Bunkhouse	Oct 22
Belfast	Limelight 2	Oct 24
Dublin	Whelan's	Oct 29

WOLFSBANE

Newport	The Patriot	Nov 24
Huddersfield	Parish	Nov 25
Norwich	Brickmakers	Nov 26
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 28
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 29
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 30
Bedford	Esquires	Dec 1

Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 3
Sheffield	Greystones	Dec 5
Southampton	Joiner's Arms	Dec 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 7
London	King's Cross Water Rats	Dec 8

Festivals

GLASGOW BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS, CINELLI BROTHERS, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 19
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HARD ROCK HELL YNGWIE MALMSTEEN, PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, TYKETTO, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 2-5
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LOOE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL FULL HOUSE PLAYS FRANKIE MILLER, BRAVE RIVAL, CARDINAL BLACK, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Dec 1-2
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LOVE LIVE PRAYING MANTIS, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, DARE, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Feb 9-11
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SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL FULL HOUSE PLAYS FRANKIE MILLER, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

Southport	The Atkinson	Oct 28
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TOMORROW'S GHOSTS THE MISSION, THEATRE OF HATE, THE 69 EYES, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 27-29
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UK BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL ERIC BIBB, WHEN RIVERS MEET, CARDINAL BLACK, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Feb 2-4
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WHITBY BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL ALVIN YOUNGBLOOD HART, REDFISH, THE MILKMEN, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 11
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WHITBY ROCKS COLLATERAL, THESE WICKED RIVERS, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 10
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WINTERS END FESTIVAL MASSIVE WAGONS, THOSE DAMN CROWS, STONE BROKEN, MORE

Trecco Bay	Holiday Park	Feb 2-4
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WINTERSTORM: LEGENDS & LEGACIES MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP, ULI JOHN ROTH, MASSIVE WAGONS, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 23-26
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LIVE!

Siouxsie

London The Troxy

Here comes that day... Siouxsie returns after 10 years.

★ Punks, goths, psychobillies, belly-dancers (!) and sharp-suited rockers mingle and swelter in this apt Art Deco space, soon shaking a tailfeather to a Jazz Age warm-up of bikini'd Charlestoning dancers with a sassy brass band. Then darkness descends for *Night Shift*, a four-note gothic strut that's the perfect opener for Siouxsie, her voice holding steady and stronger than at the beginning of this tour.

There'll be more from 1981's *Juju* (and *Kaleidoscope*, *Mantary* and *Tinderbox*) albums, and Chris Turtell's abrasive guitar lines, Joe Short's pulsing bass and Robert Brian's minimal, pounding drums have clarity and oomph the further back you go in the venue. With *Mantaray* producer and keyboard player/guitarist Steve Evans as MD, song choices are diverse and sonically wide-ranging, pushing Siouxsie's vocals further, including the ambient(ish) *Carousel* and the tribal *Creatures* song *But Not Them* (percussionists Brian and Evans, we salute you). *Here Comes That Day* is a Shirley Bassey banger, and *Kiss Them For Me* a gauzy, baggy groove. *Dear Prudence* is one highlight, Siouxsie whirling in her shiny playsuit in front of elegant, trippy back projections, and *Into A Swan* another, Bowie and NIN-meets-bhangra beat.

Peek-A-Boo is jerky, weird and brilliant, and when Siouxsie emits a bizarre, fruity growl during *Sin In My Heart* you know she's having her own fun, these gigs being done on her own terms.

Jo Kendall



Siouxsie: doing these gigs on her own terms.

The Strokes/Yeah Yeah Yeahs

All Points East, London

Victoria Park

Yeah Yeah Yeahs boot The Strokes' arses.

★ Somebody call the cops – in a field in East London The Strokes are getting away with murder. And it's not a pretty sight.

Once the image of insouciant cool, the band from New York City now paint a portrait of entitlement writ large with a performance that rarely lifts above tedium. Devoid of excitement or apparent passion, the only thing that raises an eyebrow is that Nikolai Fraiture plays his bass three inches lower than he used to. Sections of the audience are shouting for the volume to be turned up, but those getting an earful nearer the front know that no amount of sonic tweaking can save a band who seem to be sleepwalking their way through *Juicebox* and a flat *Last Nite*.

Over at the other end of Victoria Park, Yeah Yeah Yeahs are an utter joy. The dazzling figure of singer Karen O can barely contain her excitement as she swirls, stalks and high-kicks her way across the stage. Drummer Brian Chase smiles like a man about to eat a steak after breaking up with a vegan, while Nick Zinner elicits glorious fuzz tones from his guitar. New songs *Spitting Off The Edge Of The World* and *Burning* blend seamlessly with a glorious *Zero*, coruscating garage rocker *Date With The Night* and a heart-rending reading of *Maps*.

A tale of two bands from one city, it's the worst of times, it's the best of times.

Julian Marszalek

Kula Shaker

London 100 Club

Former Britpop shining lights still manage to burn bright.

★ The last time Kula Shaker played this superbly scuzzy reminder of rock's golden age, back in March 1999, they were the golden boys of Britpop, their intoxicating blend of George Harrison-inspired mysticism and classic rock riffs propelling debut album *K* and follow-up *Peasants, Pigs & Astronauts* into the UK Top 10.

Twenty-four years on, main man Crispian Mills may no longer be pop's Luke Skywalker, but on the evidence of tonight's bravura performance *The Force* is clearly still with him. Wearing a glittery gold smoking jacket, Mills is a magnetic presence throughout, wielding his guitar like a lightsaber during an opening salvo of *Hey Dude* and *Sound Of Drums* before leading the band through a set in which fan favourites are sprinkled with bangers from splendid new album *Natural Magick*.

If the breathtaking level of musicianship isn't impressive enough – debut single *Grateful When You're Dead* is transformed into a sprawling psychedelic wig-out worthy of the San Francisco Fillmore – it's their unique spirit that makes them so special, Mills leading a rapturous crowd in a loud singalong of *Tattva* and *Govinda* to close proceedings.

"We're off on a final desperate trip to [break] North America," Mills had joked earlier, after a similarly well-received *Infinite Sun*, alluding to their forthcoming US tour. Don't bet against them.

Paul Moody

Reading Festival 2023

Reading Richfield Avenue

Long-running annual bash leans towards its heavy roots this year.

★ Once a byword for heavy rock, metal and grunge, the Reading Festival has certainly changed over the decades, embracing a younger demographic and a broader pop agenda. Even so, this year's line-up still sees a few guitar-bashing heavyweights in the mix. Indeed, opening night headliner **Sam Fender** mostly shoots for pure classic-rock nostalgia with his Springsteen-lite sky-punching tear-jerkers. It's a fairly monochrome formula, but it gets the crowd roaring.

Reading regulars **The 1975** play their self-titled 2013 debut album in full, but too many dreary songs plus Matt Healy's charmless banter make an unappealing mix. **Imagine Dragons** are much more impressive, with Dan Reynolds baring his comically Hulk-sized torso and sharing self-help slogans between dazzling pyrotechnics and monster emo-rock tracks.

The Killers know how to deliver pure Vegas spectacle, stuffing their blockbuster headline set with vintage hits including *When We Were Young*, *Somebody Told Me* and *Mr Brightside*. Brandon Flowers even invites a teenage guest drummer on stage, but only after carefully checking he is not Russian, thus avoiding a repeat of the band's recent controversial cock-up in Georgia. The pop kids may rule Reading these days, but rock-friendly showmen like Flowers still know the priceless value of a huge sing-along guitar anthem.

Stephen Dalton

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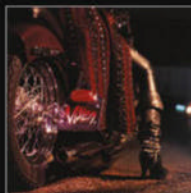
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- PAUL RODGERS - We get together with one of rock's greatest singers to celebrate 50 years of Bad Company and a new PR solo album.
- EUROPE - Joey Tempest exclusive
- DIO - Ronnie's widow Wendy on the Dreamers Never Die film project
- CIRCUS OF POWER - "We're a hard band to pigeonhole"



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Foo Fighters

528
 'The Foos give a mighty performance fit for such a formidable sonic city.'



Yeah Yeah Yeahs



Wet Leg



That hasn't come out of a 10-quid box of fireworks.

The Town

Sao Paulo, Brazil

It's not just the light show and pyrotechnics that are blazing in this extraordinary fun house of a venue.

★ "Is this who you are?" Dave Grohl asks 100,000 buzzing Brazilians – the entire population of The Town, crammed before its Skyline stage – and tests their municipal taste and identity with the riff from Black Sabbath's *Paranoid*. The Town, in an on-the-spot headbang ballot, votes yes. "How about this, is this who you are?" Grohl continues, hammering out a chunk of Metallica's *Enter Sandman* that's welcomed like an inaugural anthem. Grohl nods, satisfied that these are his people. This is his sort of Town.

The Town is a metropolis, after all, designed for pure pleasure. Constructed in the southern suburbs of Sao Paulo as a musical microcosm of Brazil's largest and most populous city – the gargantuan main stage is all tower blocks and radio masts, reflecting the city's skyline – it's akin to a Vegas vision of Sao Paulo. A jumping town square hosts concerts by samba orchestras. The dance stage resembles a psychedelic cathedral. A Broadway-style musical about wannabe superstars arriving in town for a shot at the big time plays four times a day in a dome on the main street. There's a roller-coaster, gourmet market square, working church, nightly fireworks extravaganza, a zip-wire over the main stage crowd. It's billed as Glastonbury-meets-Disneyland.

Such a maximal setting overwhelms even the most industrialised rock act. "This is fucking mental," Shirley Manson gasps as **Garbage**, inspired by their

surroundings, set the phasers of *Supervixen* and *Vow to 'obliterate'*, ramp up the sultry pout of *Stupid Girl* and charge *Only Happy When It Rains* with a dramatic emotional opening. Racing around with what appears to be a ball gown stuck to the front of her suit, as if taking both roles in the waltz of sexual politics, Manson slashes at the throat of the political patriarchy on *The Men Who Rule The World* and *Godhead*, and delivers a stirring entreaty for The Town to "be courageous, be kind". She gets our vote for mayor.

Over on The One stage – a video edifice showing local art between acts – by turns playful and tearful on this last night of a two-year tour, breakout indie rockers du jour **Wet Leg** are equally prick-kicking. Many of Rhian Teesdale's fantastic songs target cruel, manipulative or inadequate exes, with *Piece Of Shit* the sweetest yet most brutal kiss-off in recent indie-pop history, and *UR Mum* even descending into a cathartic "longest, loudest scream" interlude.

Yeah Yeah Yeahs are an audio-visual roar of their own. As the austere synth-mospherics of *Spitting Off The Edge Of The World* give way to an inspired sonic kaleidoscope – pounding electro-rock, bombastic soul, punk mania, all-consuming riot rave – Karen O spins around the stage in sci-fi druid garb, smashing her microphone into the stage during *Date With The Night*

and breaking hearts from here to Peru with a phenomenal *Maps*. Bigger than the sound indeed.

Foo Fighters, meanwhile, square up to the scale of proceedings. "You want all two hundred songs?" Grohl asks, and hammers through a tenth of them with little melodic rock let-up. Despite regular between-song breathers, *All My Life*, *The Pretender* and *Learn To Fly* blast the set skyward, while *Times Like These*, *My Hero* and *Walk* make for chem-trail glides at cruising altitude.

The absence of drummer Taylor Hawkins – honoured with "his favourite Foo Fighters song" *Aurora*, which Grohl promises to play every night from hereon – is sorely felt in a city the band were due to play days after his death last year. But his replacement Josh Freese keeps things tight and turbocharged, whether rattling through a selection of his previous bands' songs (Devo, Nine Inch Nails) as introduction, underpinning the righteous, Abbey Road-huge blues of *The Sky Is A Neighbourhood* or ensuring *Best Of You* both blisters and blusters. It's a mighty performance fit for the rising of such a formidable sonic city.

Mark Beaumont

NEW RELEASE

Escape Music is delighted to announce the release of the long-awaited Steve Overland sixth studio album title "S.I.X" featuring on guitars Robert Sall.



Available on Streaming, CD and 'Yellow Flame' colour vinyl limited to 500 individually numbered copies only



OVERLAND - SIX
Out 28th October

CD catalogue No: ESM381
Vinyl catalogue No: ESMV1014

Steve Overland is a legend in his own lifetime. Is there anyone out there who is not familiar with his name? He has a history that goes way back into the late seventies, his first major recording was with the band "Wildlife" in 1980. After the demise of "Wildlife" Steve went on to form the cult British melodic rock band "FM", a band that released many great albums throughout the years and they are still going strong to this very day.

Steve's solo work with Escape Music began with "Break Away" (ESM170), then "Diamond Dealer" (ESM198), "Epic" (ESM262) "Contagious" (ESM297) and "Scandalous" (ESM343)

This man can just seemingly continue to give us breathtakingly good songs and with great song writing. This new release for 2023 is simply entitled "S.I.X" and is being released on both CD and Vinyl (limited edition of 500, all numbered in yellow flame) and featuring two bonus tracks. Exciting news indeed!

Steve Overland just gets better, and this latest recording has been hailed as his finest recording to date.

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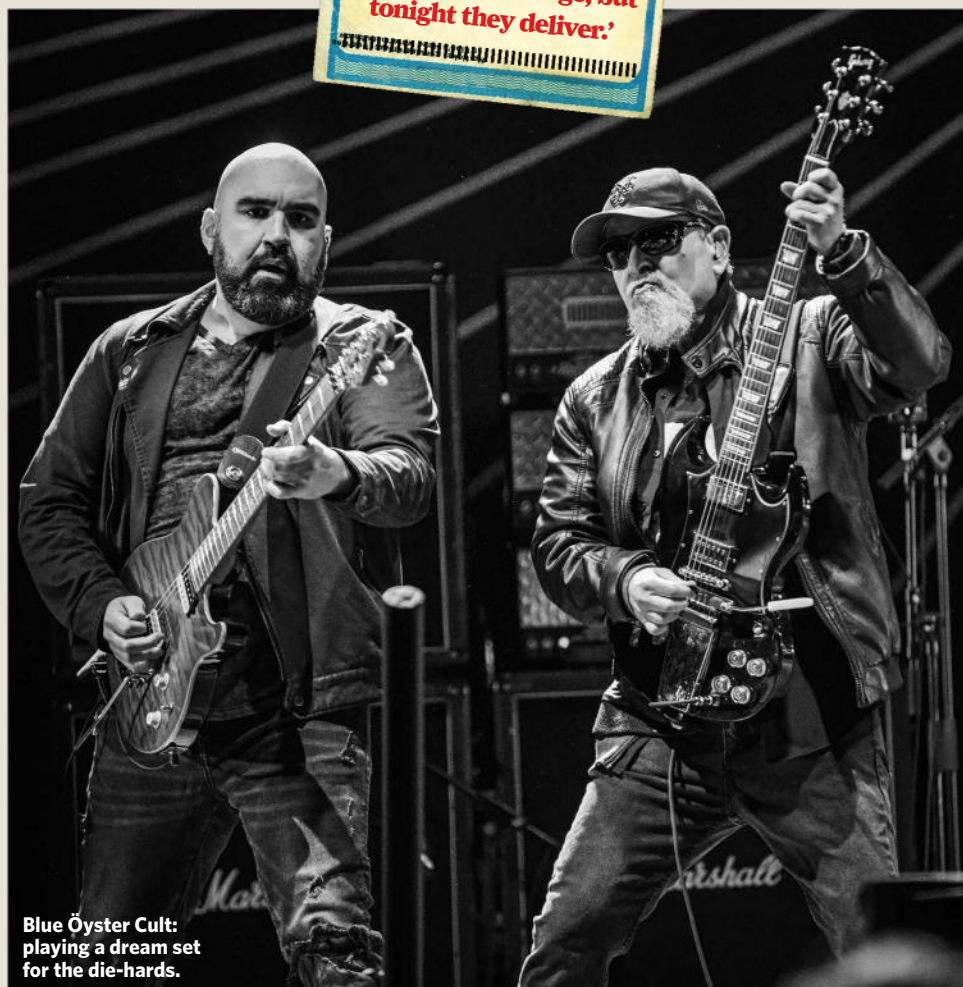
★ Created by a group of fans who were never taken with Donington's evolution into Download, Stonedead is a fantastic, friendly little annual event, that promises "one day, one stage, monster of a festival where rock music reigns eternal". And it certainly delivers.

There's a pre-party on the Friday evening, although when melodic rockers **The Karma Effect** kick off proceedings the heavens open and everyone heads for shelter. The cloudburst doesn't last too long, and **Myke Gray's Skin** get the party really started with a fun, hook-laden set.

Saturday's opening bands **Collateral**, **South Of Salem** and **Deraps** offer differing degrees of enthusiasm not always matched by talent, but Welsh trio **Florence Black** up the ante with a boisterous and enjoyable set, before **King King's** good-time groove brings the sun back out. An Irish triptych of **The Answer**, **Therapy?** and **Black Star Riders** follows, all delivering impressive sets, but Andy Cairns and co. probably take the honours with a loud, rocking, hit-packed hour.

Headliners **Blue Öyster Cult** can be notoriously hit-or-miss on stage, but tonight they deliver. The set is a die-hard's dream, with obscure gem *Before The Kiss*, *A Redcap* and a brilliant *Then Came The Last Days Of May*, before a run through *E.T.I.*, *Godzilla*, (*Don't Fear*) *The Reaper* and *Cities On Flame* brings Stonedead 2023 to a close in style.

Jerry Ewing



Blue Öyster Cult: playing a dream set for the die-hards.

Geese

London Lafayette

From prodigious neophytes to credible contenders.

★ A front-to-back-rammed Lafayette's in meltdown. New York City's best-kept secret is out, on stage and on fire. Since announcing themselves with remarkable debut *Projector* in '21, the quintet have come to define the sort of boundary-averse, ceaseless and rapid forward momentum that you might well have considered exclusive to a forgotten era.

While *Projector* was crisply precise, dual-guitared NYC art-rock, this summer's *3D Country* found the five matured into a more mainstream proposition, wrapping collegiate Radiohead noise in ear-wormed drivetime poise. Two short months later and they're no longer even a two-guitar band; while Gus Green takes sole custody of the licks, Foster Hudson has switched to keyboards and, yet more fetchingly, keytar.

They're on stage for an hour and there's barely a moment to breathe. Vocalist Cameron Winter cuts a compelling figure, insinuating falsetto into an arrestingly soulful performance as, midway through *Rain Dance* Domini DeGesu abandons his bass to dive into a seething pit cinematically alive with wide-eyed, sweat-slicked, roar-along hysteria.

Geese are as intuitively tight as maths, as instinctively free-flowing as jazz. They're an unpredictable jam band devoid of a single ounce of excess indulgent fat.

Simultaneously of-everything and post-everything, they're the best of all possible futures. Gig of the year.

Ian Fortnam

Elvis Costello & Steve Nieve

Dublin National Concert Hall

Masters at work.

★ Is it possible to name another songwriter with a catalogue as deep and varied as Elvis Costello's? It really isn't. And tonight, accompanied only by long-time foil keyboard genius Steve Nieve – a man who's an orchestra on his own – Costello dips into every corner of his canon.

We get the big numbers like *Oliver's Army*, with Nieve still flirting with ABBA, and a film-noir electro dub rejig of *Watching The Detectives* with him on a big melodica, but McCartney co-write *Veronica* redone à la early Dylan and voice-testing selections from Bacharach collaboration *Painted From Memory* are the real prizes. Even *The Deportees Club* from perhaps his most maligned (not least by himself) album, *Goodbye Cruel World*, benefits from this paring back, reclaimed in a similar fashion to the way that album's *The Comedians* became a different song in the hands of Roy Orbison.

Costello is in good story-telling form, too, cracking gags about buying a piano, and his dad learning Spanish the fun way (in bed). There's even a brand-new spoken-word piece, *John Went Walking*, about his Irish ancestors. *Accidents Will Happen* and *Alison* show that Costello was already fit to stand beside Macca and Burt way back in the 70s, and *Shipbuilding* is a hall-silencing beauty until a standing ovation roar erupts. Diving for pearls is exactly what Costello and Nieve were doing. Magical.

Pat Carty

Public Image Ltd.

Sheffield Leadmill

Great songs, swears, rant, gurning... all the things you expect.

★ Waiting to see the reconstituted PiL nowadays is full of anxious anticipation. Which John Lydon are we going to get tonight? Contrarian clown or avant-punk icon, reactionary Trump supporter or razor-witted social satirist, Jekyll or Hyde? Thankfully the 67-year-old is on strong, energised and jocular form at the start of the band's latest tour. The music is punchy, crunchy and propulsive, while Lydon's armour-piercing voice remains a glorious piece of modernist art.

Of course, it helps not to take him too seriously. An early highlight in Sheffield, recent single *Penge* sounds like a *Monty Python* sketch set to a pounding funk-metal groove. Another big crowd-pleaser is *Shoom*, essentially a puerile swears rant. There was always a latent streak of music-hall comedian to Lydon's overblown stage persona. Peter Cook's claim to have inspired Johnny Rotten once sounded fanciful, but today feels almost obvious.

The classic PiL anthems are here, most still sounding like they were written yesterday: a roaringly dramatic *This Is Not A Love Song*, a blistering *Public Image*, a thunderous *Rise*, plus a deliciously woozy, slippery, dubby *Poptones*. For the encore, Lydon briefly drops his boorish gargoyle facade to croon *Hawaii*, his tender memorial to his late wife Nora, who died in April. "Thank you for your tolerance," he says afterwards, addressing the audience, but possibly Nora too.

Stephen Dalton



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Metal Queen
Doro on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to her.

Interview: Jo Kendall



“Lemmy was totally unique; a great voice, and his bass playing had such attitude.”

Doro Pesch, who is celebrating 40 years in rock, runs down the mixtape of her life. She heard Little Richard as a toddler, survived a punkocalypse with her first band, Snakebite, and became the high priestess of metal in Warlock and as a solo artist.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

When I was three years old I heard *Lucille* by Little Richard. That's when I knew I wanted to be a singer.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

My first band was Snakebite, and my first gig with them was in a punk club in Dusseldorf. There were thirty metalheads and about a hundred and twenty punks there. At that time they didn't get along, so it was a total riot. The first song I sang was called *Shakedown*. I did my best... Then the punks got fed up with us because they wanted to hear punk rock, so they came on stage and destroyed our amps and instruments. That was my first gig! It was hard work.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

As a teenager and still in school, the album that got me was Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*. My favourite girlfriend was called Angie, and we'd go to her apartment, sit in the living room, close the curtains and listen to it. We got high without drink or anything. It's a record that still takes me to another sphere.

THE GUITAR HERO

I love Randy Rhoads's playing so much, but I never got the chance to meet him. I took part in a tribute in 2019 and sang *Goodbye To Romance*, alongside some other excellent guitarists. Randy was beautiful; he had this wonderful aura, and whenever you saw him he was smiling.

THE SINGER

Can I name three? David Coverdale was the first concert I'd seen and I was blown away by his voice, his performance, his sexiness. Rob Halford was my second-ever concert, and he could sing so high and was so *metal*! Then there's Ronnie Dio, who I saw many times, and I loved how he'd vibe with the fans.

THE SONGWRITER

I grew up with glam rock: Suzi Quatro, Sweet, Slade, T.Rex, and my favourite songwriting team was Chapman and Chinn. I always thought: "Oh, I would love to work with them", but they split up. I'll love them forever for *Ballroom Blitz*.

THE CULT HERO

Lemmy! He was totally unique; a great voice, and his bass playing had such attitude. We became friends. Although he looked quite rough and scary on the

outside, inside he was a sweet and sensitive soul, very intelligent, and someone who gave a fuck. I became an even bigger fan of his by knowing him.

THE BEST RECORD I MADE

From the Warlock era, it's the album *Triumph And Agony*, which still makes people go crazy when they hear it. From the Doro era, I want to say the new one [laughs], but also *Calling The Wild* [2000]. It had my first two duets ever, and they were with Lemmy, *Love Me Forever*, and an acoustic one, *Alone Again*, which was so emotional.

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

It's from *True As Steel*, which was a pretty good album, but the record label wanted something more commercial as a single. We were like: "No fucking way." But we had to make compromises. I wrote a song called *Heaven's Like Hellfire*, but I was given a co-writer who said: "I can make that a little better." That made my stomach turn. It became *Igloo On The Moon*. What metalhead would understand that title? I had to sing it, through tears. From this experience I learned to not do what you don't feel comfortable with.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I grew up with classical music. Years later I used to go to this Italian restaurant all the time, and hear a track playing in there that I loved. No one knew what it was, until one day a waiter told me: *Caruso* by Luciano Pavarotti. I had to buy it, and then I had to record it! It was included as a bonus track on my [2018] album *Forever Warriors, Forever United*.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

I got heavily inspired by Rock Goddess and the singer Jody Turner. One of my favourite songs was *My Angel*. I first saw them play it on UK TV. I listened to it over and over. This fantastic band, all women and with two sisters in, should have been much bigger.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT/PARTY SONG

The ultimate party song is [Judas Priest's] *Living After Midnight*. It makes people really happy. I've covered it on my new album, *Conqueress*, with Rob Halford!

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Nothing Compares 2 You by Sinead O'Connor. Her version is so beautiful, so moving. I did it as a duet with another German singer [Xavier Naidoo, in 2017] and I really felt the emotion.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

It's *Für Immer* from *Triumph And Agony*. The fans are always deep inside my mind, and I had this tattooed on my arm: "The one who loves the fans... für immer." This song would be saying to the fans: "Don't be too sad, we'll meet again on the other side." That's something I truly believe in. 🕯

Conqueress - Forever Strong And Proud is released on October 27 via *Nuclear Blast*.



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